



PS3™
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PSP™
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PlayStation® Official Magazine - Australia

ISSUE 75 DECEMBER 2012
100% Australian content

HITMAN ABSOLUTION

AUSSIE-FIRST REVIEW! THE MUST-READ
VERDICT OF 2012'S HUGE SLEEPER HIT!

23 OF 2012'S BEST
REVIEWED!

ASSASSIN'S CREED III
RETRO CITY RAMPAGE
ASSASSIN'S CREED III
LIBERATION
UNFINISHED SWAN
JOE DANGER 2
NBA 2K13
AND MORE!

EXPOSED! ▶

SEXY
TIMES

The 69 sauciest games!

8-PAGE REVEAL! ▶

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LAST LIGHT
2013's scariest trip
ripped wide open!

SHOWDOWN! ▶

CALL OF
DUTY VS.
MEDAL
OF HONOR

The year's biggest
shooters roadtested!

MULTI-MAYHEM! ▶

FUSE

Insomniac take on
the co-op kings!



ISSUE 75 DECEMBER 2012
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12

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HOW TO GO IN LOADED FOR BEAR, TIGER AND PIRATES IN FAR CRY 3!



Strong violence,
coarse language and
sexual references.
Gaming experience may
change online



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HITMAN™ A B S O L U T I O N

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HOW MANY LIVES WILL YOU TAKE TO SAVE ONE?

GOD OF WAR

ASCENSION™

BEFORE HE WAS A GOD, HE WAS A MAN.

14.03.13

COLLECTOR'S EDITION



- MULTIPLAYER DOUBLE XP UNLOCK
- PASS FOR FUTURE DLC CONTENT

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PREMIUM
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CASE



MYTHOLOGICAL HEROES
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Check the Classification

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PS3 DYNAMIC THEME, PSN AVATAR PACK

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**JB HI-FI EXCLUSIVE
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FIGURINE WITH ARTICULATING ARMS

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make.believe



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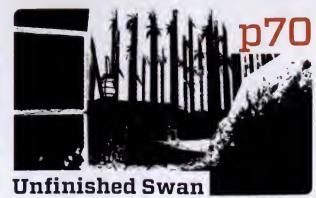
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Assassin's Creed III



Retro City Rampage



Unfinished Swan



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Free codexy

Angry Sackboy speaks out for those developers of the damned: sequelmakers p22.

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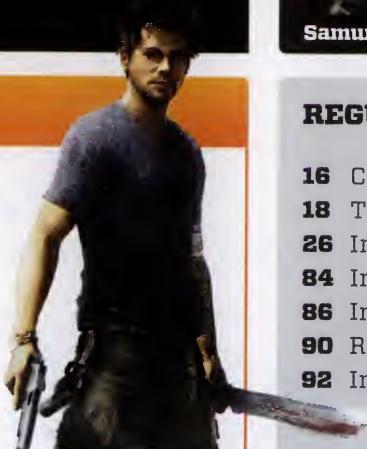


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Hitman: Absolution

When you're shooting for assassin GOTY, it's all in the execution...

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Meet the team



Paul Taylor

Deputy Editor

Snuck through most of Dunwall without being seen or heard. Next time, though, it won't be so pleasant.

Playing: *Dishonored*

Wanting: *GRID 2*



Stephanie Goh

Art Director

Reduced to spending my weekends stalking Twitter for Shift codes. More loot, plz.

Playing: *Borderlands 2*

Wanting: *Far Cry 3*



Dan Staines

Contributor

Named one of my teammates after *No Country For Old Men's* Anton Chigurh – lethal with a shotgun

Playing: *XCOM*

Wanting: *Far Cry 3*



James Cottie

Contributor

If they leave the Team Buddies out of *PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale* I'll be ever so cross.

Playing: *Borderlands 2*

Wanting: *Far Cry 3*



James Ellis

Contributor

I'm currently talking through a recent buck's party that offended the entire population of Melbourne.

Playing: *SFxT Vita*

Wanting: *Assassin's Creed III*



Nathan Lawrence

Contributor

Starting up a betting pool for the rollercoaster ride that is Sydney's weather. Fire from the sky, anyone?

Playing: *Hitman: Absolution*

Wanting: *Aliens: CM*



Dave Kozicki

Contributor

Playing missions undetected, then going back and slaughtering everything in sight.

Playing: *Dishonored*

Wanting: *DmC*



Toby McCasker

Contributor

I tried *Alpha Protocol* for the first time the other day. Now I am very unhappy. What a stinker!

Playing: *Tales of Graces f*

Wanting: *Ni No Kuni*



Angry Sackboy

Contributor

I was all set to review *PlayStation All-Stars* for you

– and then code didn't arrive.

NOT. HAPPY. JAN.

Playing: *AC III*

Wanting: *GRID 2*

Editorial



There are three bright centres to my eldest son's universe. Daddy, Mummy and Sunny Egg Dog.

For those of you without their toddler-to-English decoder wheel, that's 'Sonic the Hedgehog'. I should also mention his list is in ascending order of importance.

My kids will have it so good when it comes to gaming – way better than I ever did. As a grommit I would often dream about being the head of my own pro-videogames household. Sunny is the first brick in that foundation, and together we'll build the awesome antithesis of my childhood.

Satan issued me two older brothers, you see. These creatures of pure malevolence would regularly destroy my games or confiscate power cords. They hoped to incentivise me into giving up games and going outside to play. On the Princes Highway.

I also had my less-than-tech-savvy parents to deal with. They were always thrilled whenever my vocabulary expanded with a new word, or if I regurgitated a fact that was well beyond my meager life experience. That joy would sour to contempt when the source was traced back to being 'from some videogame' – as if knowledge could somehow be rendered useless through pixels.

According to my folks, games offered exactly zero intellectual stimulus and playing them would take you nowhere in life. In four years this job has flown me to no fewer than a dozen major international cities; my folks still haven't set foot outside of Australia. Feels like I may have won that argument.

Though people are amazed that I 'get to do games stuff' and be paid for it, I too am envious of another. I'm jealous of the new generation coming through that can play to their heart's content without being made to feel like a fringe-dwelling freak.

I'd have given anything to grow up with gaming accepted as mainstream, and I'll make damn sure to be supportive of my children's hobbies. I just hope to God their interests aren't voodoo, telemarketing, voodoo-telemarking, or dubstep 2.0.

Adam.

Adam Mathew

Editor

Playing: *Darksiders II*

Wanting: *The Last of Us*

SPEAK WITH US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins a prize! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:



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Question: what is the gift that keeps on giving the whole year round? Love? Wrong. A scratch-and-sniff calendar of celebrity crotches? No. Please stop abusing our rhetorical system

The answer we were looking for is: an OPS subscription! Think about it, every issue – cheaper – delivered to your door via magic

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PlayStation
Official Magazine - Australia

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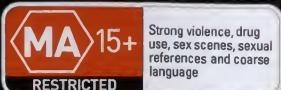
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HARDCORE

Game addiction set to become the latest mental illness

Videogames could join smoking and gambling as formally recognised mental illnesses after established psychiatric manual, the 'Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders' (DSM-IV), added the disorder to its list of mental conditions "recommended for further study."

Psychologists argue that the symptoms of videogame addiction are often quite similar to better known addictions, namely a lack of concentration and suffering from withdrawal effects.

Emil Hodzic, psychologist and founder of the 'Videogame Addiction Treatment Clinic', says addiction is recognised when the individual is "dependent on playing to feel ok" and is "feeling distressed from not playing." Addicts can lose jobs and partners, have their confidence and self esteem impacted and even create neurological changes that reduce their ability to feel good doing other things.

Symptoms of videogame addiction usually involve dissatisfaction when playing for smaller amounts of time,

experiencing withdrawal symptoms (feeling irritable, angry, agitated), being troubled about your playing habits and relying on gaming to block out negative emotions or situations.

Hodzic says videogame addicts often face difficult life challenges (e.g. feeling like a failure, difficulty managing stress, anxiety) and gaming helps to alleviate those issues.

"I get clients coming through who have experienced challenges with self-esteem, ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome, witnessing and surviving domestic violence and loss of self belief," he says. "Most of these challenges set the person up to feel more attracted to gaming which can offer things like relief from negative feelings and experiences."

Admitting an addiction to gaming is the first and one of the hardest steps in dealing with the illness but how do you treat the condition?

"We focus on rebuilding confidence and determination, identifying and preventing relapses and supporting the

Know when
to put the
pad down.



ADDICTS

gamer in playing in a healthy way or in their decision to stop completely. We also support the gamer pursuing other meaningful goals so that they have something inspiring to move towards," says Hodzic.

The illness has made headlines across the world, particularly over the last three to four years. In 2009 American teenager Daniel Petric had a game confiscated for playing up to 18 hours at a time. Taking the game back he snuck up on his parents, said "Would you close your eyes, I have a surprise for you," and proceeded to shoot them both, killing his mum and injuring his dad.

In 2010 a Korean couple became so immersed in a game about raising a virtual baby that they forgot about their real child, who starved to death.

The addiction is set to appear in the journal's 5th edition due in May 2013 as internet-use disorder and encompasses multiple forms of technology (consoles, iPads, handhelds) as well as an addiction to the internet itself.  **Martin Gladstone**



In Short

A brief look at this month's news



► **The next batch of *Skyrim* DLC will reportedly feature dragon mounts (!) and take place on the Isle of Solstheim in *Morrowind*.** According to Bethesda forum member Maddox, allusions to both are buried deep within the source code for the game's 1.8 beta patch, as are references to new items, weapons, and enemies. Please, please let it be so.

► **Cliff "CliffyB" Bleszinski has left Epic Games.** "I've been doing this since I was a teenager [and] I have been going non-stop," wrote the (now former) design director in a farewell post on Epic's website. "It's time for a much needed break."

► **A director's cut of cult adventure game *Deadly Premonition* is being released exclusively for PS3 in Q1 2013.** The new version will include HD graphics, updated controls, and a new scenario penned by designer Hidetaka "Swery" Suehiro.

► **Bioware has revealed new details about the next batch of single-player DLC for *Mass Effect 3*, including a release date: November 27.** Taking place on the lawless asteroid colony of Omega, the expansion sees players team up with ousted crime boss Aria T'loak to take down nefarious Cerberus flunkie General Petrovsky. No final word on price yet, but sources indicate it should sit somewhere around the \$20 mark.

► ***Metal Gear Solid: Ground Zeroes* will feature Peace Walker-style base building, says game director Hideo Kojima.** Accessible between missions via helicopter, players will be allowed to explore the base on foot as it develops, and may even be able to access it via smart phones and other devices. "Nowadays there are various ways to access the game world – you're not just playing in your living room," Kojima explained during a presentation at this year's Eurogamer Expo. "You may also access [it] through your cell phone and other devices and still access that same game."

► **Leaked screens of 2K Marin's controversial *XCOM* shooter indicate a radical shift in direction for the troubled title.** Instead of being a solo first-person affair as originally intended, it will now be third-person and squad-based. Still no idea when it's coming out, but.

► ***GTA V* will be out in March – or so says the website for US-based games retailer Gamestop.** Of course, retailers often list placeholder dates for upcoming games, but this isn't the first time March has been mentioned in connection with *GTA V*, so who knows!

► **Aaron Paul – aka Jesse Pinkman from TV's *Breaking Bad* – has signed on to star in the upcoming *Need for Speed* movie.** Directed by Scott Waugh, the film will be released in February next year and is sure to be absolutely sensational.

► **Move exclusive horror parody *Until Dawn* will be penned by Hollywood scribes Larry Fessenden and Graham Reznick, says developer Supermassive Games.** We don't know who they are either, but word is they're quite well-respected in the horror biz, so that's reassuring.

► INTERVIEW



Small games, big ideas

Steel Minions is a studio formed in Sheffield Hallam University in the UK, and its game *BounceBack* was released on the EU PSN. Designer, **Nick Abbott**, tells us about the studio and the game.

Tell us about yourself and your team: who are you and what type of games do you make?

BounceBack was developed by a group of students all studying game-related degree courses at Sheffield Hallam University in the UK. We worked in the Steel Minions game studio, which gave us our own space and access to all the commercially licensed software and hardware required to develop a game – including PSP and PS3 dev kits. As well as PlayStation development we have the facilities to develop for mobile platforms.

What's the biggest challenge in making a PlayStation game that's less than 100mb in size?

As a rookie team, the biggest challenge – and biggest learning experience – was in the time it took to develop a complete game. Some of the team had worked on [other download-only] games before, but

“As a rookie team, the biggest challenge was in the time it took to develop a complete game”

we had no idea what to expect from the submission and QA process. I suppose that developing a minis title gave us a small taste of what developing a full retail product might be like – and we liked it! The biggest surprise benefit was winning the Rockstar prize for Best Team at the Game Republic Student Showcase and getting internships at Rockstar Leeds.

Why is minis a good platform to make games for?

I think minis development is harder than developing for mobile platforms – particularly if you use an engine like Unity, which is what a lot of student development teams do these days. We wrote our own engine and tools from scratch in C++, which means our game may look quite simple, but it is 100 per cent our own work. Fortunately for us, the industry recognises that and we beat all the Unity games to win three out of four of the top student prizes in our region.



Minis were originally designed to invigorate the PSP market but now they're made to work on PSP, Vita and PS3. Is that a benefit or drawback?

Definitely a benefit. We included extra texture resolution in the sprites and the PS3 takes advantage of this when it renders the game. Lovely.

What other games do you have planned, and why are they going to be awesome?

The team are moving on to take up jobs and internships at Rockstar Leeds, Sumo Digital, Red Kite Games, and Distinctive Developments. We'll always remember our first game and the fantastic benefit that the Steel Minions studio gave us in establishing our careers. ♦

PlayStation
minis
Developer
Interviews
PART 4

OPS VAULT DECEMBER

2005 ▶

Action packed! EA's grand return to the roots of the series wowed us seven years ago, and it's set to wow again (the review code



unfortunately did not meet this issue's deadline). It was a big month for the PS2 and PSP, as our review section proved: Resident Evil 4 struck gold with a 10 out of 10, Rockstar's The Warriors earned a 9, and The Matrix: Path of Neo got 8. GTA: Liberty City Stories snagged 10s across the board. Solid Snake was back in MGS4 on the so-close-we-want-it PS3.

2009 ▶

We were facing a brave new world with Resident Evil 5. Co-op play was making us think hard about what direction the survival horror series was moving in. 'Sideways' was one answer. More impressively, we had an in-depth Q&A with Yoshinori Ono, the producer of Street Fighter IV, where he told us about the studio's decision to go with that art, why SFIV is more of a tool than a game, why SFIV is like chess, and why SFIV characters were 'weird'. Then, Saints Row 2 scored 9 out of 10.



2011 ▶

It's a man, with a rocket launcher, riding a horse, whilst being chased by an explosion. 10 out of 10. We probed one of EA's company men for the hard answer on Syndicate – only for it to be banned a few months later. Swapping guns for swords we got stuck into Final Fantasy XIII-2 in our hands-on feature, and we teased it could be 'one of the best FF games in ages'. Wasn't. Then, Saints Row The Third scored 9 out of 10.



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FROM SOFTWARE



Around the World

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in tech and gaming



SIMPLY THE VEST

MASSACHUSETTS, USA

Imagine if every time someone 'Liked' one of your Facebook updates, that person emerged from your monitor Ringo-style and gave you a big hug. Wouldn't that be nice? Now imagine that, instead of receiving real hugs, you wore a vest that inflated to simulate the sensation of being hugged. What you're imagining is Like-a-Hug: the world's first "social media vest" from Melissa Chow and her team at MIT. "Like-a-Hug [brings] us closer together despite physical distance," explained Chow, moments before being hugged to death by 1,000 fans on Facebook.



GERONIMO!!!!!!

NEW MEXICO, USA

Austrian daredevil/crazy person Felix Baumgartner became the first man to break the speed of sound recently after skydiving from a capsule floating 39km above the Earth. The 43-year-old reached a top speed of 1342km/h (or 1.24 times the speed of sound) during his record-breaking descent, freefalling for more than four minutes before deploying his chute and floating safe and sound to the ground below. "When you're standing there on top of the world, you become so humble... the only thing you want is to come back alive," Baumgartner told reporters afterwards.



I'M LEARNING!

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Studying videogames in the classroom could help students acquire basic literacy skills, says a visiting British academic. Speaking at the University of Sydney, Professor Andrew Burn from the University of London argued that there are "no obvious negative effects" to using games in class, pointing out that many of the negative effects associated with games (like anti-social behaviour) can be mitigated with sound pedagogy. "It has taken 100 years to get [film] anywhere near the curriculum," he said. "We shouldn't leave it so long with games." Hear, hear!



SPHERE WE GO AGAIN

SAN JOSE, USA

A team of students at San Jose State University in California have constructed a motorcycle with spherical wheels that can do everything a normal bike can and a bunch more besides. Using an array of gyroscopes and accelerometers to maintain stability and balance, the Spherical Drive System electric motorbike comes with an extra set of joysticks that allow the rider to strafe, rotate on the spot, and reverse freely. At present, the team is working to get the bike stable and safe at 15km/h, but of course the finished version will go way faster. We hope.



BOT TO TROT

THE INTERNET

Bot Prize is an annual event in which AI bots built for *Unreal Tournament* compete to convince a panel of judges that they're human, like a videogame version of the Turing Test. The winner of this year's comp - 'Mirrorbot' - convinced four judges that it was human with a 52 per cent success rate, outscoring its AI rivals - even other people. According to creator Mihai Polceanu, the bot works by imitation, observing its human adversaries and copying their behaviour. Makes sense: what better way to appear human than to... copy humans? Just like the Terminator!

INTERNATIONAL TOP 5 CHARTS

EUROPE



- 1 **FIFA 13** Electronic Arts
- 2 **Resident Evil 6** Capcom
- 3 **NBA 2K13** Take-Two Interactive
- 4 **Borderlands 2** Take-Two Interactive
- 5 **F1 2012** Codemasters Racing

JAPAN



- 1 **Resident Evil 6** Capcom
- 2 **Pro Evolution Soccer 2013** Konami
- 3 **F1 2012** Codemasters Racing
- 4 **Dead or Alive 5** Tecmo
- 5 **Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning** Electronic Arts

USA



- 1 **Resident Evil 6** Capcom
- 2 **NBA 2K13** Take-Two Interactive
- 3 **FIFA 13** Electronic Arts
- 4 **Madden NFL 13** EA
- 5 **Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception** Sony Computer Entertainment

► INFOCUS

Ni no Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch

There are a lot of very good reasons to look forward to *Ni no Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch*. First of all, it's a Level-5 game, and Level-5 just happens to be the same studio that brought us gems like *Rogue Galaxy*, *Dark Chronicle*, and *Jeanne D'Arc*. You want pedigree? Level-5 has pedigree up the wazoo.

Secondly, *Ni no Kuni* (which roughly translates as "Another World") has been developed in collaboration with Studio Ghibli. This is the same Studio Ghibli responsible for some of the most memorable animated features produced in recent memory. *Spirited Away*, anyone? *Princess Mononoke*? *Arrietty*? Great films, all of them, and absolutely beautiful to boot — just like this game.

Finally, *Ni no Kuni* is an old-school turn-based RPG that is (reportedly) hard as balls. Like, not *Vagrant Story* hard, but a stiff challenge nonetheless. Wouldn't have picked it from the screens, would you?



THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and the good stuff!



Dec 5

Total Recall

Man, forget that steaming turd of a remake. Get back to the source with the Blu-ray release of the original Arnie blockbuster. We'll see you at the party, Richter, when you get your ass to Mars.



Dec 5

The Man With the Iron Fists

In feudal China, a blacksmith must defend himself and put the "F-U" in Kung Fu. This R-rated epic releases in cinemas today, stars Lucy Liu and Russell "Fightin' Round The World" Crowe.

Dec 5

Child's Play

No this isn't the very worthy, videogame-related charity of the same name. We're talking about the Blu-ray release of the '80s horror film that scares Steph.



Dec 6

Trouble with the curve

We love us some Clint here at OPS – Eastwood, that is. You can see him in cinemas today as an ailing baseball scout in his twilight years taking his daughter along for one last recruiting trip. Awww.



Dec 6

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey

Today it's time to do two things: return to Middle-earth, and also see if the whingers were right about this film looking like a home-video because it's filmed in 48 fps. Fingers crossed.



Dec 13

Rise of the Guardians

This Dreamworks film stars Aussie talent Hugh Jackman and Isla Fisher. It also features The Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy, and a Sword-wielding cossack Santa. No, seriously.



Dec 26

Parental Guidance

We'll watch anything that features the delightful Billy Crystal. Here he's a grandfather trying to adapt to the ways of the 21st Century (read: all of your InterTubes) while babysitting his grandchildren.



Dec 26

Mass Effect: Paragon Lost

This Blu-ray extravaganza tells the prequel tale of Alliance Marine James Vega, and it's actually a fascinating insight into this otherwise shallow beefcake of a character. Also; Renegades rock harder than Paragons.



Can't miss... Wreck-It Ralph 26 DECEMBER

Finally, our billion dollar hobby gets some interest from the execs at Disney. *Wreck-It Ralph* is the tale of a videogame villain who wants to be a hero. His quest brings havoc to the whole arcade where he lives, and includes an 8-bit butt-load of cameos from actual videogame characters.





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► TOP TEN

Samurai games

Forget history books and *knowledge*. If you're like us, you know that everything you need to know about the samurai can be pieced together from Akira Kurosawa movies, sugar packets, and the following top ten videogames...



1

Bushido Blade

The samurai were the masters of making the act of quitting like a sissy look like the manliest thing you could ever do. Case in point: hitting **SELECT** in a two-player *Bushido Blade* match would make you humbly request an assisted suicide. When all your arms and legs were hacked up, no longer functional husks, it was the only way to go out in style. Banzaaai!



2

Bushido Blade 2

The old axiom 'never bring a knife to a gun fight' meant bugger all to the samurai. Few joys compare with successfully slicing the cheap bastard player who plays *Bushido Blade 2* against you with the chick packing the M16. Die, sexy troll.



4

Way of the Samurai 3

During the tumultuous time of the Sengoku era, at least one samurai carved his name into warrior history by... baby-sitting a dog. Other mini-games included 'help the old lady toll the bell', 'dismantle the giant tuna', and 'make sticky rice cakes'.



3

Kengo: Master of Bushido

After innumerable hours spent meditating and chopping candles, a master samurai could earn the right to paddle seven shades of shit out of students with an (unlockable) oar. Tradition, folks. Tradition.



5

Samurai Shodown

The samurai were always brooding and by-the-book people. This (PSN) game let you get in their face with your musky odors, literally. Earthquake could grab samurai, and fart full in the face of their honored tradition. And we loved it.



6

Onimusha 3

When times were tough and full of demons, samurai could relax knowing that they could receive backup from a time-travelling Jean Reno. Forget what history class told you. This crap actually happened and, like, all of the time.



7

Brave Fencer Musashi

Miyamoto Musashi was a legend and we have it on semi-okay authority that he's aptly portrayed here. Swordsmanship wasn't his goal in life. No, he loved collecting action-figures, like a dork.



8

Afro Samurai

Contrary to popular belief, Japanese samurai were African, had 30cm afros and were Sam-Jackson-level foul mouths. They regularly dismembered topless ninja women, or guys wearing pedobear facemasks.



9

Soul Blade

Fact: samurai searched the world for weapons and fought European ghost pirates, Italian S&M freaks and American Indians. One in particular, Mitsurugi, fought a one-on-one duel with a rifleman, like an absolute bawss.



10

Genji: Days of the Blade

Being based on historical battles that 'ashully' took place in ancient Japan, this game offered a fascinating insight into the day-to-day of samurai life. Apparently, these elite warriors experienced real-time weapon changing, and faced giant enemy crabs with massive damage. Their bravery would later become eternal, thanks to Internet memes.



► INFOCUS

Beyond: Two Souls

According to Quantic Dream bossman David Cage, *Beyond: Two Souls* is the most ambitious game he's worked on to date. That's quite a claim, especially when you remember that Cage's CV includes trailblazing blockbusters like *Fahrenheit* and *Heavy Rain*. This is clearly a dude who likes to push envelopes, and here he's pushing them about as far as they'll go.

Where some developers are content providing vapid escapism for the masses, Cage strives to provide something deeper –

something with meaning and purpose. His stated goal for *Beyond: Two Souls* is to craft an intense emotional journey in which the player is compelled to confront difficult questions relating to the meaning of life, death, and morality. This will be more than just another game, he says – it will be an experience that leaves a permanent imprint on the minds of those exposed to it. It will be something people think about and discuss. Something to remember.

And you know what? We're inclined to believe him.

► IN REALITY

The Looting Epidemic

Gimme some of that sweet, sweet loot.

Having blasted the skeleton with duel firebolts to the face we rummage about the bag of bones for the glorious loot he contains. A war axe, some bonemeal, fair enough. Fifteen gold coins you say. Where in all of Skyrim did our boney friend come across such a prize? Did he attack a wandering traveler? Perhaps he stumbled upon a decomposing mammoth masking immeasurable wealth amongst his hairy coat. Let me add these items to an already ridiculously over-encumbered body. Who says I can't spend the next two hours lumbering back to the closest merchant with a weight of 2000?

Aside from the law, no-one. According to a survey of 500 worldwide hotels by travel agent lastminute.com, one in every ten guests will steal at least one item during their stay. Toiletries, telephones and televisions are commonly stolen but then it just gets weird. How about a set of curtains, a used mattress and sofa, a cigarette machine, even the floor (the whole carpet had to be cut out).

Those one in ten hotel burglars are secret looters, the friends who visit your house and covertly lift your \$500 replica Joker cane you should not have left for everyone to see. Detached from their addiction to looting in games they have been forced to feed their addiction in the outside world. Of course getting caught they must



suffer the consequences. There are no checkpoints in reality.

In New South Wales the most commonly stolen goods are cash (22.6% of cases) and jewellery (21.5% of cases), according to a study by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. In keeping with standard looting procedure these items offer a high value to low weight ratio, basic knowledge for any *Elder Scrolls* veteran. There's nothing worse than having to lug a king size mattress down to Cash Converters only to discover the time spent thieving and transporting it has earned you the same amount coin as you would have pocketed had you spent an hour looting the local supermarket.

Going back to the skeleton, though, we are compelled to ask: how

does an undead horror attach loot to his body in the first place? Superglue? Velcro? Some form of organic pocket to make up for their lack of on-body storage space? No, it would have to be sticky tape, invisible to the naked eye from a distance and easily attached to a bony surface. Of course it's unlikely sticky tape was available in the fourth era of Skyrim's history.

Finally we are left with the most pressing question of all, for what purpose would a skeleton require a small pouch of coins anyway? Being dead, they don't require food or water, and considering they rest and sleep on the ground it would be a stretch to think they pay rent. Let's just say they too have become hooked to looting and leave it at that.

► Martin Gladstone

The Ultimate Heist

Two jet engines were stolen from a Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) jet back in 2007 and were only recently discovered in Uruguay. The RMAF didn't report their loss until May last year when officers wanted to service the jets. The two General Electric J85-21A engines are now being stored at an RMAF base in Subang, Malaysia. Two men have been charged with the theft.

► NUMBER CRUNCHING

84

◀ Percentage of game sales that can be predicted by analysing Google search queries and clicks.

43

▲ Number of consecutive hours it took pro-gamer Matt "BLiTZ" Siegfried to become the first person to hit the level cap (50) in *Borderlands 2*.



Separated at Birth!

NO. 44 *Dishonored's* Lord Pendleton and Hugo Weaving



It's the stare that does it. Beneath pronounced brows, beady eyes glare with uncompromising severity, pupils piercing your soul like daggers forged in the fires of Hades. It's a confident gaze, but it doesn't inspire confidence – just the opposite, in fact. If Hugo Weaving and Trevor Pendleton both glared at you at the same time, chances are you'd piss yourself and faint. In that order.



I'm a
Biter

UNDER OR ALIVE[®] 5



► OPINION

SET YOUR PEOPLE FREE

Why don't we let our best and brightest make something different for once?

Yuji Naka cocked his leg on the promising young sapling that was the video games industry years ago by programming the original *Sonic the Hedgehog* [uh, Sack, that's actually Sunny Egg Dog – Ed]. I'm not sure if that analogy works; I'm trying to paint a picture of a happy man who's made his mark on something. By pissing on a tree. Like a dog. I think you get it.

But I digress.

I never liked *Sonic*. It's nothing personal, and certainly nothing against Naka himself. I just never got it. Half the time you don't even really feel like you're playing it; you're just a ball blasting across the screen at the mercy of the level design. But I'm getting sidetracked again.

Point is, while I've always thought *Sonic the Hedgehog* was kind of shite Yuji Naka seems like a pretty bright fellow. In a recent interview with Polygon, Naka was keen to voice his concern that some of the industry's best and brightest minds seem permanently trapped under the shadow of the games that made them a success in the first place.

"Like with Nintendo: Miyamoto

has been making *Mario* games. He's under that too. He has to keep on making *Mario* games," said Naka. "[Eiji] Aonuma has to keep making *Zelda* games. [Hideo] Kojima has to make *Metal Gear* games. I wish he could take that off of everyone's shoulders so they could create other stuff, like new stuff. Because that's healthier for the industry. Movie directors create all sorts of movies, and the movie industry is healthy. I wish the game industry was like that as well."

“Why do we maroon some of our best talents on sequel after sequel after sequel?”

Naka makes a fine point. Now, I appreciate a great sequel to something I love as much as the next fellow, but it's not all I want. It's certainly not all I want the industry's most-talented folk stuck doing.

Like Naka says, imagine if the film industry operated like this? Imagine if, after directing *Batman Begins*, Christopher Nolan was forced to remain entirely dedicated to Batman movies. Churning them out one after

the other. Nothing but *Batman*. Every few years another *Batman* movie, with no end in sight. All *Batman*, all the time.

I love *Batman*. *Batman* is awesome. I can deal with more *Batman*. I welcome it. But not at the expense of everything else. Imagine not having *The Prestige*, or *Inception*, or whatever it is Chris Nolan will be doing next, because all he's permitted to do is make *Batman* movies?

That's what we have in video games. Are we ever going to see something other than *Metal Gear* from Kojima, one of the most influential and innovative video game directors in the industry? Sure, he's got an executive producer credit on a few other titles, but *Metal Gear* is the series that consumes all of what Kojima has to give. I'd like to see what other stories Kojima has to tell. Something that has nothing to do with *Metal Gear*. Something entirely different and fresh.

What's Kojima's *Inception*?

Why do we maroon some of our best talents on sequel after sequel after sequel? ↳

OPINION
Angry Sackboy

Angry Sackboy is an ex-video game journalist who thinks *Sonic the Hedgehog* is largely overrated.



► INFOCUS

Dead Island Riptide

Set on an island paradise overrun by rampaging mobs of bloodthirsty ghouls, *Dead Island* was an inventive and accomplished mélange of survival-horror and *Skyrim*-style open world adventure. It did something new, and it did it well. We like it lots.

A direct sequel, *Riptide* picks up right where *Dead Island* left off, introducing a new setting, new abilities, new enemies, new weapons, and – yes – a new playable character in the form of hard-nosed navy'bro John Morgan.

Trained extensively in martial arts, John uses a combination of rapid-fire kicks and punches to decimate the undead. How this approach gels with *Dead Island*'s robust weapon upgrade system remains to be seen, but one thing is certain: if we can't decapitate a zombie with a single, devastating uppercut, we will be thoroughly disappointed.



► OPINION

THE “F” IN TALES OF GRACES F

Hint: it doesn't stand for 'friendly'

PS deputy ed Paul “PT” Taylor has been puzzling over what the small “f” in *Tales of Graces f* might stand for. At the time, I wasn’t sure what to tell him without sounding like a noob saibot. “Oh probs nothing, Japanese games are weird,” was about the sum of it. Having become irrationally obsessed with said game over the past few weeks, though, I think I’ve worked it out.

That “f” stands for “fuuu-.”

“Fuuu-” because while *ToGf* is possessed of the kind of traditional JRPG charm that’s been hugely lacking this generation, it throws up so many opportunities with which to innovate during the course of its narrative really naturally – but it doesn’t take them. Never once. The fact it was originally a Wii game from back in ‘09 is obvious in the simplicity of its graphics and the relative safety of its oft-trite plotting (it even includes a token amnesiac), but that’s no excuse for the fact that when Asbel faces off against his younger brother much later in life, there’s no hope of victory. It’s a “scripted” fight. You’re supposed to lose to further the plot via subsequent ejection from your hometown, even though you’ve just spent the last seven years training to be a knight and Hubert’s presumably just been reading loads of books and learning how to walk in those heels. The fact you cannot win this scrap makes no sense, and is the first of many *ToGf* scenarios that begs for a branching storyline – a mechanic JRPGs could substantially benefit from. What if Asbel kicked his brother’s ass? The bet they make prior to squaring off boils down to the loser relinquishing authority over Landt and exiting the scene. It’s not a titanic stretch of divergent writing to make either outcome valid, because a little later on there’s a pretty handy catalyst that’d work to suture both variables.

In this way, *ToGf* is a breath of stale air. On the one hand, it’s damn near refreshing right now to play an old fashioned epic with adorably daft anime bobbleheads. The localisation is exceptional and works very much in favour of making *ToGf*’s triple cream brie narrative addictive rather than simply bearable, with the post-melee exchanges in particular often legitimately funny.

Sophie: Pascal, what’s an airhead?

Pascal: Someone who’s so smart, they can control air with their mind.

Sophie: Wow, you’re amazing.

Hilarious. On the other hand, *ToGf* is a consistent reminder of why JRPGs the way Japan intended are having trouble finding traction on a gaming landscape swamped by progressive design elements like moral choice and open-ended paths from A to Z. Where once these things might not have even been a consideration in a game like this, now you can’t help but think of them because Western riffs on the formula such as *Fallout 3* and *Mass Effect 3*

have sown seeds that would undoubtedly grow into impressive oaks were they to be spread among an exclusive JRPG planter box. To detonate or not detonate an entire settlement that has been good to you in *Fallout 3* can and does work either way; the fact you can – SPOILER ALERT – brutally gun down Mordin as he insists on a cure for Krogan infertility in *ME3* is unforgettably resonant, and entirely feasible. Some semblance of linearity will always have an integral place in the kind of storylines that span far and wide as favoured by JRPGs – but it’s still possible to get where you’re going by walking in a squiggly line rather than rigidly straight one.



OPINION
Toby McCasker

Toby McCasker loves JRPGs so much he rubs them over his body to get his Sephiroths off.

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WHERE IS MINE GAME?

Sup fellow gamers and OPS staff,

I had bought *Minecraft* on PC early this year and couldn't get enough of it. I showed it to my friends but they said it was stupid. My friend owns a 360 and when the console version came out he got it.

My friend invited me to his house so I could play it and, surprisingly, it blew me away. There was no lag and the controls were definitely better than that of the PC.

Then it had me thinking: could I buy this on PlayStation store? After looking and looking sadly I knew that the answer is no.

How come we don't get *Minecraft*, is anyone else disappointed about this, are the creators going to make a PS3 version? I would really like to know.

P.S. This magazine rules the earth!
Jack Pickering, via email

Jack, if we did indeed rule the world we'd enact a law that says *Minecraft* has to be a true multi-platform title. It would then be available to any gamer that likes destroying whole ecosystems for the purpose of building a fully-sick cubby house.

We've nearly missed many a deadline thanks to its installation on the office computers – and when

your workplace is littered with PS3 and PS Vita debugs, that's saying something about how fun it is.

Why isn't it on PSN? Three words: binding legal contract. Is there no hope? Three more words: wait for *Terraria*.

Terraria is another DIY hit from the PC, but fobbing it off as a 2D *Minecraft* clone just isn't doing it justice. It makes the crafting process into more of a focused game, with boss enemies and timed events that remind you that you're still playing a videogame. That said, you can still make your own fun (and phallic edifices) to impress your friends and/or get you banned from a server.

In short, it's all sorts of boss, and the word is it's headed to PSN.

GIVE ME SCREENS

Howdy OPS,

I love your mag ladies and gents. There is no question of that, as I regularly send emails to your fine publication's inbox.

I have been buying the *Official PlayStation Magazine* since it launched on PS One (which I believe you guys took over maybe halfway through the PS2 lifecycle, or was it near the end?).

LETTER OF THE MONTH



LETTER OF THE
MONTH WINS:

ASSASSIN'S CREED III

It's our lead review this month. Read all about it on p62!

Anyway, point is, waaaay before OPS existed and even before Sony had a console in the market, I used to buy a couple of overpriced US based mags called *GamePro* and *EGM* (this was the 16-bit era). And the point I wanted to bring up to you guys is a feature in those mags, which I absolutely loved.

Every few issues they would have 6 – 8 pages (maybe more) of upcoming games with maybe 20 – 30 small size pictures of these games with a small amount of text about them.

Although I already love the mag and buy every issue without fail (even subscribing for several years), I would love it even more-so if you put those little thumbnail style screenshots of masses of upcoming games in the mag, spanning 10 or so pages, every third issue or so.

Can you please take me back to my misspent youth, as it will fulfil my nostalgia urges, as well as imprint (what is a memorable feature for any magazine on any subject), onto the brains of a whole new generation.

It will make your mag even more awesome, and more sought after by rabid little PS3, PS Vita, PSP and even PS4 heads. All of them waiting at their mailboxes, salivating on their school ties every month.

Keiran Stibbard, via email

Hey Keiran, it's not often that we get feedback on the art design of the mag, but we're all ears with your idea. Typically, we do features that approach what you're describing when E3 rolls around. We may look at doing something similar when it comes time to do a Chrissie special/ buyer's guide. We make no promises, though.

We can, however, reward your worthy feedback (and long-haul dedication to the mag) with a copy of *Assassin's Creed III*. Here's to many more issues, mate!



Mounting dragons: not as adult as it sounds



Odehviing: Amatit! Mo bo kolin stinselok!

WORLD WAR WHO?

Gamers today generally seem to get annoyed when they hear of sequels, but I think the problem isn't sequels in general, it's sequels to certain series.

I am of course referring to the ones with so many yearly iterations (EA, Activision and Ubisoft I'm looking at you guys). While *Just Dance* and *CoD* get the chance to come to our shelves every year, some beloved series haven't been around for ages.

I'd really like a new entry for...

1 – *Unreal Tournament*. Most shooters today attempt to differentiate themselves from *Call of Duty* by focusing on single player and co-operative gameplay. *Borderlands 2* is probably the most fun co-op game I've ever played and *Far Cry 3*'s campaign and open world look very promising. I could sure use a sequel to the incredibly fun *Unreal Tournament*, series, c'mon Epic, four *Gears of War* games in a row is enough!

2 – *Destroy All Humans!* Like almost every other Pandemic game the first two entries in this series were very creative, fun open-world games that didn't realise their full potential. Unfortunately Pandemic was closed down before it could try again. Volition could pick up the remnants if they apply the same amazing destruction physics, over-the-top weaponry and irreverent humour they've shown in previous games.

3 – *Jak & Daxter*. Naughty Dog is a developer I have confidence in, and so their choice of making new IP, *The Last of Us*, instead of a *Jak* sequel seems to have paid off. But that definitely doesn't mean that I wouldn't wait for one.

4 – *Syphon Filter*. So... what happened to that sequel that was supposed to come on PS3? *Syphon Filter* is easily one of the most iconic games on the original PlayStation and the PSP entries are quite fantastic. Myself and a lot of other games could use another adventure with Gabe Logan. Hey Sony, there's this other portable console you can release *Syphon Filter* on...

The last game that needs to return is:

5 – *Guitar Hero*. I'm kidding.

My real choice is *Brothers In Arms* as it's been a while since we had a AAA historic shooter on the market. I know

the amazing folks over at Gearbox are pretty busy right now, so I'll be patient. Bonus points if they make a prequel set in World War I, that was a bloody war that didn't receive much exposition in the world of games.

Thank you for reading my article.
Saed Batshon via email

Saed, been a while, hope you're well. We always love reading your letters, and as usual you've hit upon a point close to our heart. You're spot on with all of the games you mentioned – especially *Guitar Hero*.

We've also been patiently waiting for a World War I game to come along and steal our time. Our hopes were pinned on *To End All Wars*, but it's stuck in the trenches of development hell. Somebody get a fricken Kickstarter going, already.

EXCLUDED

Dear OPS,

What's the deal with console exclusivity, I mean what's the point?

If one store gets a game before any other store they'll make more sales, that makes sense. If a console gets a game or DLC before the others all it's going to do is tick off the people who have to wait and give a few fanboys some useless bragging rights.

Take *Skyrim* as the obvious example; Xbox got *Dawnguard* a full month before anyone else and PS3 is still in the dark. I understand the PS3 version's tardiness is due to technical issues but the argument still stands.

The only time someone should have early access to game content is if they preordered or bought a limited edition copy. They're the people who shelled out a bit extra cash and committed to the game long before it was guaranteed to be worth it.

I fear that this unfair trend of console favouritism will continue and at the end of the day, or month or even year they're still going to get our money because in most cases our desire for the game will outweigh our negative disposition towards being left out in the cold.

Sam Bussing, via email

Sadly, you're absolutely right, Sam. Many of us will buy without remembering how annoying the wait was – and that's how publishers get away with it. Time and time again.

After the *Dawnguard* fiasco, we're considerably less than impressed. If Bethesda try to delay any *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* DLC that allows dragon mounts, we're likely to just *SNAP and Fus Ro Dah them back to Morrowind*. Don't think we won't.

Cuttings

► Dinnertime!

Dishonored: the game where rats eat people whole. Seriously, it's disturbing.

Callum Turnbull,
via Facebook

Mmmm, yummy.

► Tissues at the ready

I'm legitimately disturbed by the lack of an *Okami HD* mention in this and the last issue..

Alex Oh Why,
via Facebook

Does your mention of a mention make up for it?

► The big names

What is your obsession with Nolan North??!

Sonny Joseph Dean,
via Facebook

No obsession; the dude is in more videogames than most other people.

► M.I.A.

I don't see Crash Bandicoot. WHERE'S CRASH BANDICOOT. WHAT.

Alex Mason,
via Facebook

Weird, right? It's not like he's doing anything else lately.

Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia on 

▼ Storefront

What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Freddy Maka
F1 2012

"Good gameplay & features."



Catherine Mae
Borderlands 2

"Gets sexier and sexier."



Brad Allard
Borderlands GOTY

"Snagged it at the EB Expo – cannot stop playing!"



Jake Rowe
Dishonored

"Refreshing, stylish – Deserves all praise."

▼ Caption This

You put the words to the screen. Simple.



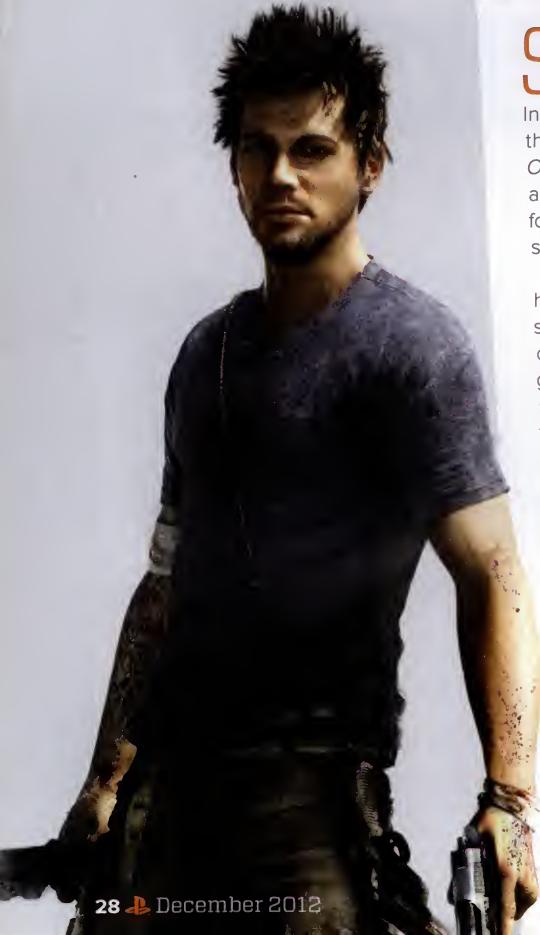
"Marvel's lawyers are right over there Mr Bulk."

Jeremy Scott has a marvellous time with this screen.

in

This Month

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Black Ops II
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- 41 Oddworld: Abe's
Oddysee New N'
Tasty!



Staring down the barrel of co-op king, *Borderlands 2*, we wouldn't want to be *Overstrike* right now. It's clear that Insomniac games has given the matter some thought, too. Which is why what was once *Overstrike* has since been rejigged, retooled and refocussed into *Fuse*, a four-player, co-op focussed FPS that's better equipped to share shootin' space with Gearbox's darling.

But whereas the original *Borderlands* once had to make its own metamorphosis into cel-shading to better differentiate itself from its own competitor, *RAGE*, the evolution of *Fuse* has gone the other way. The *Overstrike* of E3 2011 seemed light-hearted and playfully comedic, the transformation into *Fuse* has come with a heavy slathering of grit and maturity.

Narrative tone has shifted, but there's one feature of an Insomniac game that was never not going to be delivered: memorable guns. Guns so creative their secondary function may just as soon liquefy enemies as they might macramé them some jean shorts.

You need only look back to the Gadgetron guns in the *Ratchet & Clank* series, or the alien boomsticks in *Resistance*, to recognise Insomniac's obsession with left-field firearms. *Fuse* is no different, even going so far as to give its loopy weapon tech a major focus in the plot. The element 'fuse' is a wonder material that gives your four-member squad,

'Overstrike 9', its immense stopping power and god-like abilities. When the bulk of this powerful substance is stolen by a nefarious PMC called Raven, our team is told to go and clip their wings. With bullets.

We respond to Raven's initial assault on the Hyperion installation, an Area 51 cubby house that guards the precious fuse material. As we're inserted into the mission area, HQ spices up the mission briefing: U.S. Senator William Fable has recently delivered a ludicrously dangerous battle-mech called the Enforcer to the base.

We don't have to wait long for visual confirmation on whether Raven has commandeered it. Like every aviating extra ever, our helicopter pilot is killed as the Enforcer jack-in-the-boxes out of nowhere. Our 'team extreme' survives a Michael Bay crash and sets out after the ED-209 wannabe.

The Enforcer has used most of the installation as its jungle gym, and we pick through the seriously damaged labs for equipment. In a moment of pure serendipity, our plucky four-person team finds an undamaged laboratory that has *four experimental fuse weapons*.

Dalton secures a Mag Shield, a defensive tool that allows our friendly bullets to pass through it while deflecting enemy rounds. Izzy snags a Shatter Gun which renders enemies into smashable statues. Jacob acquires an Arc

Our 'team extreme' survives a **Michael Bay crash** and sets out after the ED-209 wannabe."



The Pitch

Caring, sharing four-person co-op

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: INSOMNIAC STUDIOS
RELEASE: TBA 2013
PLAYERS: 1-4



"Are we so dissimilar, hoo-man? If I eat Mexican do I not get heartburn, too?"



Shoot the orange bit for **massive damage**, minimum surprise



Izzy Sinclair is packing the Shatter Gun. It not only crystallises enemies, but lifts them in the air to be shot like clay pigeons by your buddies. When it's not freezing people into hideous carbonite husks, the Shatter Gun's secondary function can be counted on to heal wounded buddies, or revive fallen ones from a distance. When Izzy's blood is up, her Special Ability will cause the Shatter Gun to envelope more enemies at once, and make their bits explode when they hit the ground. Nasty.

Naya Devereaux is a short-to-mid range bandit whose Warp Rifle can cause serious trouble in the wrong hands. Shots from this weapon allow Naya to chain enemy kills together. Shoot an enemy a few times and they'll have a faint nimbus around them, and killing them in this glow-worm state causes a blackhole to manifest and suck them to their doom. As a goodbye bonus, the blackhole will explode and take out anybody near it. The Warp Rifle's secondary function masks Maya in some light-bending camo, and her Special Ability makes the gun fire faster and create larger blackhole explosions.





Dalton Brooks is the leader of the team and his Mag Shield makes him a human tank. He's a short-to-mid range specialist who excels in pushing into enemy-controlled space while soaking up any bullets and shrapnel they foolishly dish out. Everything that is punched his way may then be slingshotted, return-to-sender at the touch of a trigger. If you're sick of being everybody's bullet-sponge, you have a secondary fire option that lets you ditch a temporary shield for the team (while keeping one for yourself too). His Special Ability lets him fire bullets out of the Mag Shield, even if none are currently floating in it.

Shot, whose crossbow-like nature and extended range effectively makes him the sniper of the group. Last but not least, Naya gets a Warp Rifle that basically fires localised black holes.

So far, so standard.

It's in a chunk of exposition that we learn that the Enforcer has been activated within the defense grid in an effort to secure an especially potent fuse cache known as 'The Source'. The team are tasked with destroying the cache lest it fall in the hands of evil men, and to achieve

this they're given free reign with their wonderful new toys.

The high-tech rent-a-goons stand little-to-no chance as our team blasts its way to the designated area. But just as we're setting up enough C4 to send Ayer's Rock into orbit, Overstrike 9 is challenged by Mei Lin Mao. She's Dalton's ex-girlfriend from hell and is now working as a high-rank henchwench for Raven. Any ideas about blasting her and The Source to hell are quashed when she reveals that the good senator is her hostage. To his credit, Dalton considers wasting the politician anyway, "because he didn't vote for the guy". Sadly, he's shouted down by the more sensible members of the team.

The result of Overstrike 9 losing its grip on this fuse cache will be felt throughout the rest of the game. As the

"Dalton considers wasting the politician anyway, 'because he didn't vote for the guy'"

game progresses the Raven eggheads figure out how to better manipulate the element and you can expect enemies to become increasingly lethal and sci-fi.

Heavies will evolve from riot shields to Mag Shields, and you can expect to be stabbed in the back by Predator-like infiltration units. But while your enemies are bound into rigid professions, like 'shield guy' and 'sneaky bastard', thanks to a new 'leap' mechanic, any player controlling Overstrike 9 will never be constrained by training or equipment.

Regardless of whether you're playing by yourself – or with three human players and an AI stooge in split-screen – *Fuse* will let you swaperoo into any free member of Overstrike 9. This means you can not only switch things up when you're getting bored, but it also allows for a

TRUFAX: before Overstrike 9
Kimble was a **Kindergarten Cop**



Jacob Kimble is a mid-to-long specialist who deals out slower-rate sniper-shots of death with the Arc Shot. The weapon has the added bonus of being able to pin your enemies to walls, plus the secondary function lets you detonate your bullets. This can be done when the bolt is in mid-air or if it's lanced into heavy armour. This makes it perfect for hit and run tactics, or for mining thoroughfares with bolts that can be one-touch exploded. Jacob's Special Ability makes every shot 'double' explode on impact. Mmm, double explosions.

They Say

"Collectively, [Overstrike 9] are the agency's outcasts. But [when] a shadowy organization threatens to wipe out humankind, each agent's unique talents and a tendency to completely ignore protocol make them the *only* option."

We Say

Wait, what? Mankind is in danger and you hitch our fate to a bunch of rejects maligned by their Special Forces contemporaries. Cool plan, bro.

Verdict



much broader set of tactics when it comes time to gunfight.

Interestingly, your unlocked skills and XP won't make the leap with you. We're interested to know if AI bots can auto-level up without your influence, or if *Fuse* will require you to constantly leap between all four characters to keep them on an even keel in terms of skills. If it doesn't, the micromanagement of upgrading could become tedious. If it does, we sure hope there'll be the option to 'respec' away any dodgy skill-tree decisions the AI makes.

One thing is for certain, Insomniac is quite against the lone-wolf concept in *Fuse*. You may think that all your running-and-gunning by your lonesome is earning you phat 'Fuse points', but you'd be wrong. The reality is you're

diddling yourself out of bonus XP by not coordinating your tactics with a fellow Overstriker. For example, Dalton can set up a shield, Izzy could fire the Scatter Gun through it, and Naya could blackhole the frozen enemies into nothingness. Alley-oop your enemies like that and you'll earn a motza of extra XP.

There's an old saying we have here in the OPS office, and that's "friends who slay together, stay together". Since playing *Borderlands 2* that slogan has devolved into "get your hands off my loot, or I'll duel you in-game, or punch you in real-life". Frankly, we're looking forward to going back to playing nice with each other again. At least until somebody constantly 'leap-hogs' the only sniper in Overstrike 9 – then it's right back to threats and beatings.  **Adam Mathew**

"Woah, that's not the button to tune in Triple J"

Far Cry 3

Loaded for bear. And tiger. And Komodo.

Talk to 10 different people about what they did in *Far Cry 3* and you'll get starkly different accounts of the game they're talking about. You could come away thinking it's an adventure game, or a hunting sim, or an open-world lark for people who wished *Red Dead Redemption* was a first-person shooter.

You're given the freedom to cause as much chaos as you'd find in *Just Cause 2*, but the narrative constantly beckons, pulling you into its sinister, twisted web. We were worried that the two streams of gameplay would be at odds with one another – like Niko Bellic running around Liberty City with a rocket launcher before attending a wedding – but the two layer on top of one another without detrimentally breaking the tone.

The curveballs come immediately with an intro that belies the game's true intention, a montage of American college kids on holiday, enjoying themselves as they ride jet skis, ATVs, and go sky diving. This footage soon cuts to Jason Brody – that's you – who's trapped in a cage with

his brother, Grant. Leering through the bars is the psychotic, coked-up leader of the pirates, Vaas, who's taunting them both. Why you've been captured is soon revealed, though we get the feeling the real, far more menacing reason will become apparent later on.

Grant would be a more traditional, logical hero: he's the one with the army experience, who knows how to move silently, avoiding line of sight and gets you out of the cage. Crucially, he's the one that knows how to kill and isn't upset by doing it. The time you spend together is short.

However, you're Jason. He's an ordinary guy, and almost from the start he's duty bound to do something he barely feels capable of. The fear in his voice is thoroughly palpable in between the weeping and babbling, completely unsure of what's going on.

It's up to him to find his other, younger, brother, and their friends. Before long he's being chased through the jungle, performs his first, frantic kill and falls into a river. A saviour called Dennis plucks him from the raging waters and with a nod to *Far Cry 2*'s opener you're prone on a bed, unable to move and given a weapon, but the person who helps you isn't an adversary but

The Pitch

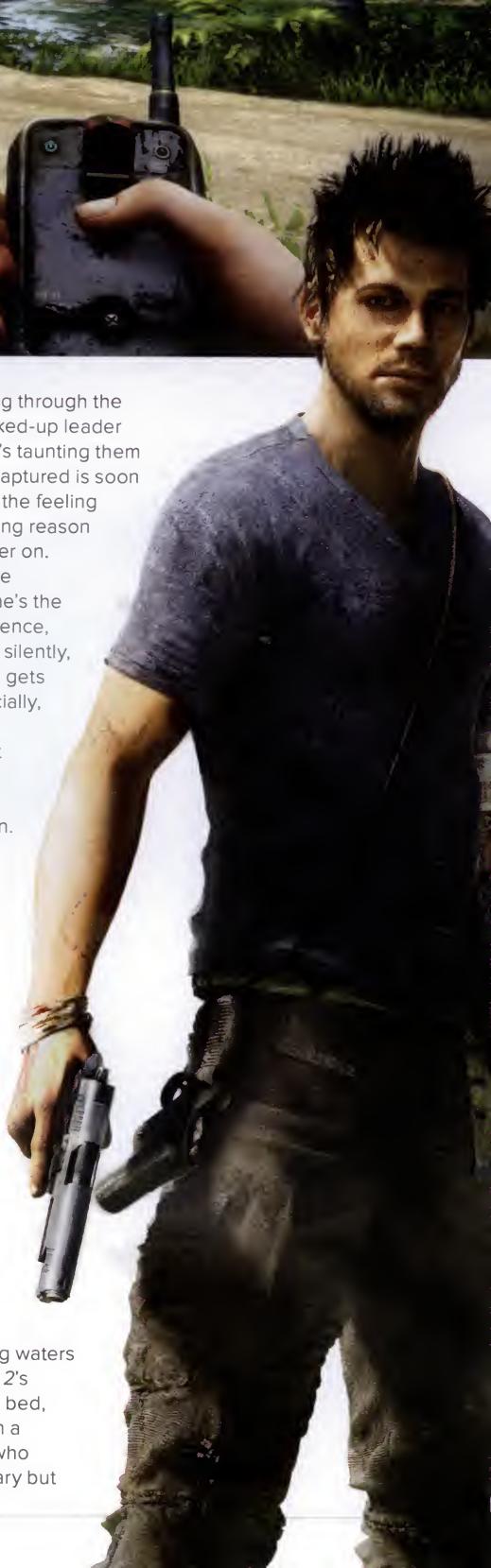
A twisted, story-driven single-player campaign, four-player co-op, and multiplayer where you can spare your enemies, all set on a massive island paradise that's gone to hell

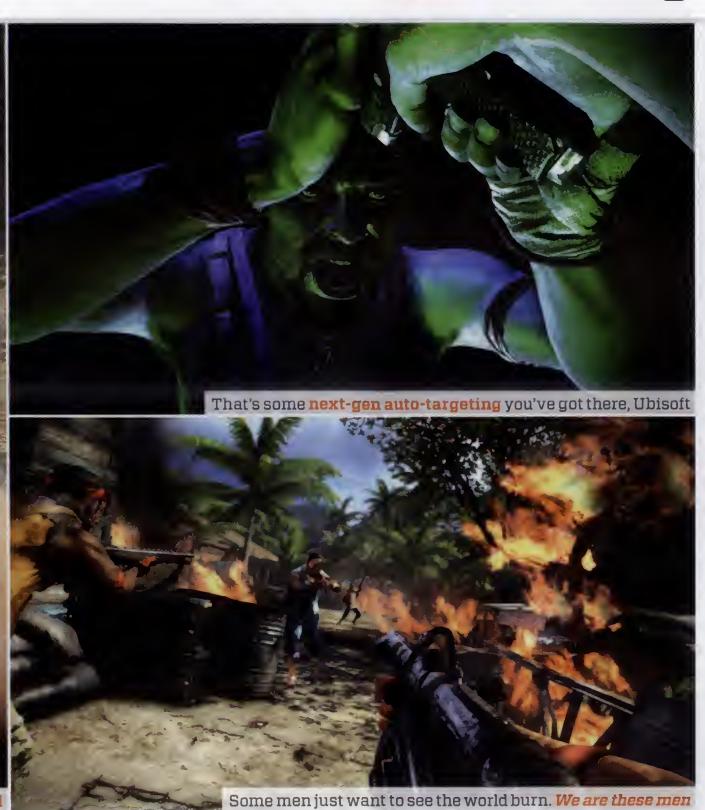
Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: NOV 30 2012
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL
PLAYERS: 1 - TBA



"Ahahaha! Now this island is POWERLESS to stop me-ZZZZTTT" "Thump"



If you can dodge a bullet, you can **dodge a ball**

That's some next-gen auto-targeting you've got there, Ubisoft

Some men just want to see the world burn. *We are these men*

“ He’s an ordinary guy, and almost from the start he’s duty bound to do something he barely feels capable of ”

a friend. He tells you that to help yourself you need to help Amanaki Town.

Out in the world the systems familiar to all open-world games are present here, but they’re presented in a new way. Herbs in the ground – and sometimes under water – are collected for health potions and special abilities (such as finding an animal by its scent, or being able to sneak up on timid creatures without them running away). Loot can be pawned in shops, traded in for weapons and ammo. As we revealed last month, radio towers are scaled much like towers in *Assassin’s Creed* to reveal the layout of the land on your map. While it’s technically possible to travel from one end of the world to the other, you’ll be a little lost without the map.

The map shows more than way the roads twist and turn. Symbols indicate the best places to go hunting for animal skins

that bolster your abilities and capabilities. For instance, deer hide is used for rocket packs. Without that, you’re not going to be able to carry a launcher since you have no space for ammo. Although loot is plentiful, your wallet can only hold a few hundred bucks, so you’d better get skinning in order to craft a bigger man-purse in order to save up for the dearest guns. We were pleased to find that on our way around the world we collected a few hides that could be used to make a bigger wallet, but the largest one needed two shark skins, thus keeping the heavy weaponry well and truly behind the counter.

You could go hunting as a means to an end, but sometimes komodo dragons just happen, and they move at a lightning pace just below your natural line of sight. It’s petrifying to hear the low growl of big cats as you’re crouched down in tall grass, and they usually require both barrels of shotgun justice. However, the enemy AI has trouble with it too.

We taunted a tiger by throwing rocks at it as it slept near an enemy outpost. The cat awoke, spotted a bad guy who strayed just a bit too close into its line of sight and leapt into the encampment. Only a few seconds before the pirate had been complaining that “it burns when I piss. I should’ve used a rubber.” Five men later and the tiger’s permanently put down, the sounds of confusion and gunfire perforating the tense silence. We then go in and mop up the stragglers, then skin the creature. Just in case.

Far Cry 3’s motif is insanity, and it looks like all meanings of the definition – doing the same thing over and expecting different results (as spouted by Vaas), not being of sound mind, and doing absurd actions – will be well and truly served. Get ready to go crazy. **Paul Taylor**



“This family BBQ ramped up into a flame-war kinda quickly, huh?”

They Say

“You find yourself stranded, caught in a bloody conflict between the island’s psychotic warlords and indigenous rebels. Struggling to survive, your only hope of escape is through the muzzle of a gun.”

We Say

Far Cry 3 toys with your expectations like nothing else. While the stuff you do on the surface is familiar to all open-world games, it’s the cleverest and most shocking shooter we’ve seen for a long time.

Verdict



Until Dawn

I know what you did last savepoint

At best, *Until Dawn* could be the wake-up call that PlayStation Move games need. At worst, it'll create a new sub-genre we'll call 'stupid-sexy-survival-horror'.

It's inspired by slasher teen-horror films, which typically revolve around the stranding and subsequent massacre of a bunch of shag-happy teenagers in the middle of nowhere.

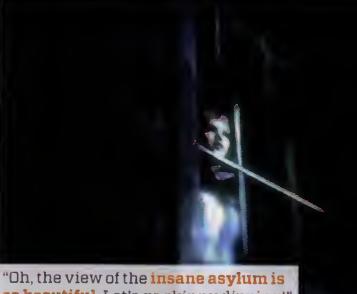
To be fair, a lot of them deserve it. When presented with danger, these dunderheads will opt to either hide in the abandoned amusement park; the pet cemetery; a spooky roller disco; or go skinny dipping in that lake where the sexy teens were killed 100 years ago tonight.

In *Until Dawn* you'll no longer want

to yell at the screen, or slap your forehead when horniness overrides common-sense. You'll be the one making all the decisions – stupid, sexy, and otherwise.

You can forget about motion-controls being optional. This linear, story-driven affair essentially uses the PlayStation Move as a flashlight. Wave it about and the light it casts will pierce the oppressive darkness and make you move in that direction, too. If you need to move faster – and you will – the pressure-sensitive analogue trigger will offer you every movement speed from 'creeping' to 'strutting, care-free', to '(literally) piss-bolting for your life'.

The plot isn't particularly inspiring,



"Oh, the view of the **insane asylum** is **so beautiful**. Let's go skinny dipping!"

but Supermassive Games offers some cool gameplay twists. You're one of eight improbably attractive teens out for a dirty weekend at somebody's ski-lodge at Mount Washington in British Columbia, Canada. This remote locale loses power as the sun goes down, which allows a mystery – possibly supernatural – something to pick you off one at a time. Interestingly, by handing the 'Move' flashlight to another character you can shift into their first-person vantage point and prevent their death.

According to Supermassive Games, there will be countless ways to play though this, though there's a singular story thread that must happen when all of the game's chapters have concluded.

Every move you make and clue you find will have a flow-on effect. Ignoring a torn up scrap of paper (that can be manipulated in your hands like an *L.A. Noire* clue), might not be a big deal in terms of survival. Passing up the chance to get a shotgun, and then stumbling outside into woodlands

The Pitch

Slasher tropes. Motion-controlled gropes

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE

EXPECTED RELEASE:

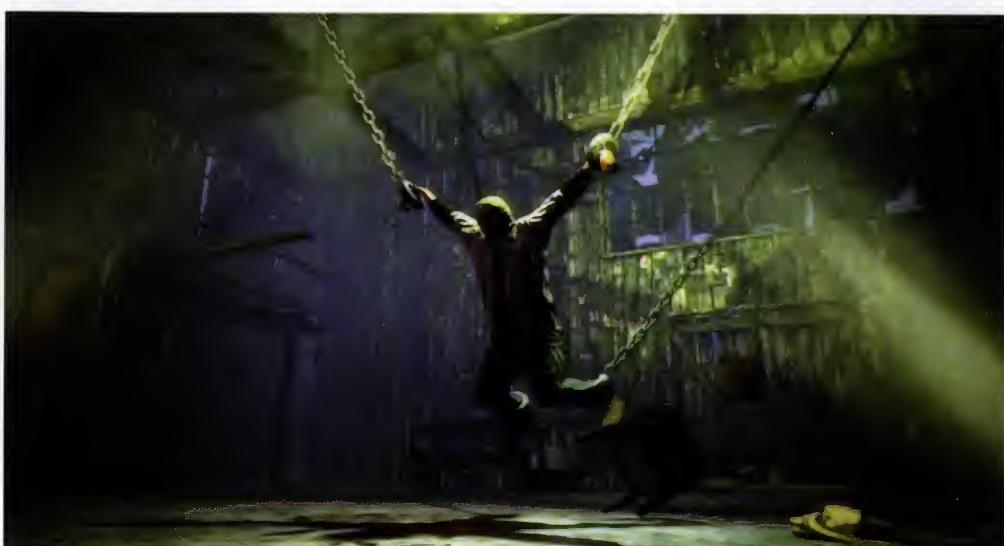
TBA 2013

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER:

SUPERMASSIVE GAMES

PLAYERS: 1



Because all love scenes
should have speed blur



"Until Dawn is a rare breed of game that can draw people around your TV and keep them."

decorated with eviscerated deer carcasses may have a much bigger impact on your character. Like, an axe through their brainless head, kind of impact.

The good news is, of all of the unique permutations of this experience, there is at least one that lets you make it through with all eight sacrificial lambs intact. But after putting up with a games-worth of their screeching and dodgy dialogue, what's the point of doing that?

The setups and one-liners that get spouted by the cast are tongue-in-cheek bad. But it has to be said that the scare-triggers are surprisingly effective, providing you've got a dark room to play in. *Until Dawn* is a rare breed of game that can draw people around your TV and keep them there, even though they have no control.

Having a few extra people around you definitely helps when the *Silent Hill* / *Resident Evil* puzzles show up.

Where the script is deliberately cheeseball and tacky, the same cannot be said of the top-notch visuals. In a short demo entitled 'If You go out in the Woods', we're treated to truly sumptuous graphics. Supermassive has put in meticulous attention to detail, and even a fairly languid stroll to a moonlit cabin, with hornbags Michael and Jessica, keeps our interest with its pitch-perfect atmosphere. There's nothing like moonlight slicing through the branches and the hollow sound of boots crunching on snow to get your neck hairs up.

Our amorous twosome notice none of this, of course. They've been 'sex-iled' from the larger group of

nymphomaniacs, and ordered to go 'get a room'. The two braincells they're both operating are much too occupied with double entendres (like "it's so cold out here my tongue is going to stick to your flagpole") to notice they're trudging to their doom.

To make matters worse (or better, for horror fans) Supermassive ratchets up the tension around our oblivious victims – only for nothing to happen. Right when your guard's down is when the hammer falls. It's rather masterful stuff, really.

Until Dawn definitely has potential. Supermassive obviously knows how to play its cards right by not revealing its antagonist(s) early. Also, while we won't spoil the fate of Mike and Jess, there's a decent amount of gore-factor when things go bad. If the studio can deliver true and meaningful narrative variations – not to mention a control scheme that doesn't make us want to go on our own killing spree – then this could be a title well worth stalking.

Adam Mathew

They Say

"[Until Dawn] is where you have a group of teenagers disappear off to some remote location. The power is usually out; the phone is always out. And then, one by one, they get killed off. And they're always trying to get off with each other."

We Say

Why has nobody made a game about this until now?

Verdict



World Racing League? Western Rally Lovers?
Windows Runtime Library? We haven't a clue

GRiD 2

Specged up, tech-ed out

Codemasters Racing don't want *GRiD 2* to be a simulation, even though they're showing off what could be a best in class physics system. In an unprecedented move they've also ditched all the usual racing assists, so when you're stomping on the brakes and reefing the steering wheel all the way into full lock, you can only blame yourself for the car spinning out of control.

Instead, Codemasters say they are going for 'authenticity'. It's a word they apply to moments even when you aren't in a race, from the build up and tension on race day, to the nervous seconds on the track before the lights change and everyone is revving their engines. Once the race has started, though, and everyone's jostling for position, their evolved EGO engine is paying attention – the technical term is 'sampling' – to every little nuance 10,000 times a second; how your car's weight is distributed in the suspension and the tyres, the angle and camber of the track, and who's rubbing up against you.

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: RACING
RELEASE: TBA 2012
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER: CODEMASTER RACING
PLAYERS: 1 - TBA



Their implied logic is that while other racing games run at 60 (or even 30) frames per second, they might also sample at the same rate. *GT4* did this, and Polyphony Digital hinted that *GT5* would sample at 300 to 600 times per second.

All of this is being fed back into the DualShock or wheel, not just to bring you as close to feeling what it's like to control a race car as possible, but to make it fun. Watching the game in action, cars have tendency to step out, with cumulus clouds of tire smoke billowing up behind them as they screech to a halt.

The technology doesn't stop there, as the crash modelling has been comprehensively reworked, from the way the cars deform to the fine level of destruction. We've always been impressed with the way the cars in the *DiRT* series come apart, and with a large field of competitors there's loads of opportunity for breathtaking collisions.

There's more than just graphical trickery. Street races morph as the event goes on, with the actual layout of tracks in the cities shifting and folding around. A tight corner may replace a straight on the next lap, and then weave to somewhere unexpected on the final lap. This is in an effort to present more of a challenge. It sounds insane, and we're throbbing to see it in action.

Paul Taylor



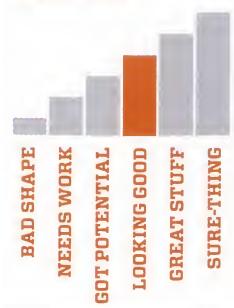
They Say

"[We want this to represent] everything that's great about racing, everything that's great about motorsport."

We Say

All the stuff that goes before a race was ditched from stablemate *F1*, and the game let the races reflect its tone. We want the same to happen here.

Verdict





Call of Duty: Black Ops II

CoD gave Blops and perks to you

Even though *Call of Duty* is on a yearly rotation it still has the power to surprise, invent and innovate. What's clear is that the meat of *Black Ops II* is in the multiplayer mode, or at least playing with others. If you thought that *Modern Warfare 3* was a set three-course meal, the mains being juicy steak with creamy side dishes, then *Black Ops II* is a gourmet Brazilian BBQ: there's lots to sample, and it's up to you how you choose to gobble it up.

We haven't seen this much choice put into players' hands before. Killstreaks have been replaced by scorestreaks in multiplayer, in a move to promote players actually working together rather than hogging all the kills.

So, play CTF and you get points for defending the flag, picking it up, kill assists and so on. Choose a defensive class with a shield as your main weapon, and if a teammate uses you as a buffer as he frags an enemy, you get points too. Your kill/death ratio could be an abomination, but play to make your team better and you'll get some sweet, sweet drone action.

The new create-a-class re-writes the rules on loadouts. Rather than being forced to pick the usual pyramid of primary, secondary, single attachment, grenade type and so on, everything's



"I'm chewing alright, gettin' folks afraid. My future's so bright I gotta wear shades"

based on a 10-point system; with the right perks you could have three attachments for your primary, or – as we did – ditch all weapons except for a knife and shock charge (a new, non-lethal item that electrocutes enemies), moving silently and swiftly, causing a lot of panic and frantic bullet sprays. It should make for even more insane YouTube videos.

There's also provision for absolute beginners too. Rank up from level 1-10 in Bootcamp and get full XP with three human players and three AI bots on your team. After that, in Objective, you get half XP with a similar humans-and-bots setup. Or, you could team up with a friend and go nuts in Bot Stomp without earning XP to see all the Scorestreaks you'd have to fight for in the main game.

Then there's zombies mode – or, rather, three modes. Four-player co-op Tranzit is a 'world tour' where you're on a bus and must obey its schedule as it goes from town to town. Grief is two teams of humans versus zombies, where the last team standing wins. A standard survival mode remains.

There's so much more to talk about with this, and we'll have a full review next issue. Paul Taylor

They Say

"Call of Duty: Black Ops II multiplayer will introduce players to some of the most cutting-edge weaponry and equipment that 2025 will have to offer."

We Say

Sure, the tools are cool, but the way you'll use them is what's really astounding. Prepare to be very impressed.

Verdict



The Pitch

The Biggest Shooter In The World shrugs off brand fatigue.

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

RELEASE: NOV 13 2012

DISTRIBUTOR:

ACTIVISION

DEVELOPER: TREYARCH

PLAYERS: 1-18



Puppeteer

It pulls all the strings

Puppeteer's story is the stuff that can only come about from a cheese dream. A young boy called Kutaro is kidnapped by the Moon Bear King, and taken to a castle on the shadowy side of the moon. After making his captor angry, Kutaro's soul is transplanted into the body of a wooden puppet, and his head chopped off, leaving him to find replacement skulls to get himself out of this mess.

He's not totally helpless. Each of the new heads he finds have special powers, and he's also been given a pair of magical scissors called Calibrus that interact with the environment – and enemies – in different ways. Kutaro's also joined by Yin Yang, a cat that can find clues and hidden objects.

While it's a platformer at heart, *Puppeteer*'s presented in a truly unique manner. Everything that happens takes place on a stage, inspired by a Japanese form of puppet theatre called Bunraku. An off-screen audience is watching you,

and they audibly react according to what you do on stage. Time a jump so that you only just make the adjoining platform and they'll gasp. Perform well and you can expect to hear their appreciation.

A vast array of lighting techniques take the theatre motif further, and the scene changes every five minutes or so, parts of the set being whisked away and replaced. It's visually dynamic as well, the props on stage moving around to give more life than you'd expect to a static array of items, and the fixed camera – putting you in the strange position of being both a member of the audience, stuck in in your seat, and also as the director affecting the character on stage – means everything you see has been meticulously planned to take advantage of a single point of view.

Each new set provides opportunity for the gameplay to change, and how you conquer it relies on the heads that you'll find. Lose your top and you only have a few seconds to put it back on before everything resets. So, for instance, a head in the shape of a spider lets Kutaro clamber over webs in the castle. His scissors, meanwhile, give you the power to change the set by snipping away at the background, and also chop cloth-based enemies to shreds.

Puppeteer wants to tell a story by mimicking a medium many gamers haven't experienced before. While the screenshots show off a saturated palette, loaded with hyper-real colours, they don't capture or hint at the life and charming sets. And, it's big: this isn't a small PSN title, it's a full-blown Blu-ray release. Truly unique. Paul Taylor

The Pitch

A young boy/puppet, aided by a cat, has to escape his captor's castle on the moon by swapping heads. Er, what?

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE:

PLATFORMER

RELEASE: TBA 2013

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: SONY

JAPAN STUDIO

PLAYERS: 1 - TBA



They Say

"Players will enjoy a rich, dark fairytale where surprises lurk around every corner."

We Say

LBP is proof that simple presentation has hidden depth and loads of surprises in store. *Puppeteer* is on a charm offensive, giving the PS3 something it's never seen before.

Verdict





Remember Me

Make mine a BLT combo to my mouth

A firm release date for *Remember Me* hasn't been confirmed yet, but already Capcom is talking sequels. In a recent interview Capcom's Michael Pattison said, "We do intend to work on this IP for a long time to come," and "We see a long-term future in it and we're going to invest appropriately."

So what exactly is Cappers betting big on? Something innovative. We've previously covered the plot of *Remember Me*, and the weaponised memory wipes of its palindromic protagonist, Nilin; the next big feature in this sci-fi extravaganza is something called the 'combo lab'.

At any point in the game, you can pause the game and re-jig your kung fu skills. You can have four active combos

and they're made up 'pressens' – single move attacks that have a variety of benefits. Of the pressens we saw, there were health regenerative ones, logic bombs (that destroy enemy shields), hacks (turn flying robots into friends), distance covering fury attacks, and even a pressen that will earn you more pressens (by making enemies drop more XP).

All of those pressens are divided into four types, chain (replicates the last pressen you did, but at twice the power), cooldown (reduces waiting times), power (heavy damage and finishers) and regen. All told, there are some 50,000 combo combinations, and the fisticuffs itself are suitably meaty. In short, it's impressen the hell out of us. Clint McCreadie

The Pitch

Dazzling combat in a near-future sci-fi dystopia

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE
RELEASE: TBA 2013
DISTRIBUTOR: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: DONTNOD
ENTERTAINMENT:
PLAYERS: 1 - TBA

They Say

"I want people to see our game as more about intimacy than about just hyper powers and enhancements."

We Say

We'll beat your game – because you made it personal, goddammit.

Verdict



Medal of Honor Warfighter

A patriot's game?

The Pitch

Take control of two elite Tier One operators in an overlapping story arc

Info

GENRE: SHOOTER
EXPECTED RELEASE:
OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: DANGER CLOSE
PLAYERS: 1 - 12

There hasn't been a whole hell of a lot to report as far as *Medal of Honor: Warfighter* has been concerned with EA playing its cards close to its chest since this year's E3, and due to our print deadlines we were unable to get review code for this issue. Given the divisive nature of reviews of its last iteration that's not necessarily a bad thing, though it does have some interesting set pieces that we got our hands on.

After storming the beach in Somalia, breaching several floors and getting accustomed to some remote control robotics like an uber-aggressive Short Circuit on a cadre of insurgent pirate sons of bitches, we had cause to take a breather and taste something different. Stretching out on a couple of tables armed with a high calibre sniper rifle, with a spotter calling out the shots, it was time to induce a bit of skull-cracking head trauma as we protected incoming friendly attack choppers from hostile enemy fire.

As heads popped like a teenager's zits we packed away our gear and skedaddled over to Pakistan for a palate-cleansing chase through the bustling markets and claustrophobic back streets. We were in the driver's seat, and you'll be surprised how well the vehicle's control in a dedicated shooter like this. Expertly weaving through traffic we rammed into our quarry, exited the vehicle and greeted him with a punch to the face. As the screen faded to black we kinda dug the little morsel EA fed us with our interest piqued to see what the finished version holds. Dave Kozicki



Under pressure. You might have to respawn to give yourself one more chance

They Say

"Players will step into the boots of elite Tier 1 Operators and apply their unique skill sets to track down a real global threat, in real international locations, sponsored by real enemies."

We Say

The jury's still out, but adding a little *Call of Duty*-style action to the franchise could be the booster shot it needs.

Verdict





Sacred 3

Grind your manners

The Pitch

Action-RPG from a top-down view, with loads of sword and sorcery. Emphasis on 'action'.

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RPG

RELEASE: TBA 2013

DISTRIBUTOR: TBA

DEVELOPER: KEEN GAMES

PLAYERS: 1 - 4

Do you remember *Sacred 2*? You might, if you were looking for a new *Baldur's Gate* back in 2009, but it was an underwhelming title. While there was loads of action in the sprawling areas, and bolstered by familiar RPG mechanics, it was rough to look at. Characters and environments may have been the product of a wild imagination but lacked a deft final touch to make them really stand out.

Enter a new developer, looking to up the production values but also hone in on what makes games like this great. The camera is much tighter than before,

and Keen Games is concerned with action. Not just action in terms of a lancer wielding a double-bladed staff, carving through opponents, or a burly brawler tumbling into a stack of enemies, but the kinetic motion of keeping the wider game smoothly rolling on.

It has more purpose than before, rather than dropping players into a wide open space and having them cope with the gulf between beats. Production values have been ramped up, and we hope the same can be said about quest structure. One thing is for sure; bring friends. It's a game that's being built for online co-op.

Although it's early days, *Sacred 3* doesn't want to follow the formula, but take it as a guide and do more than ever before. **Paul Taylor**

They Say

"We want to keep the charm of the series and you will stumble upon one or another popular character of the prequels."

We Say

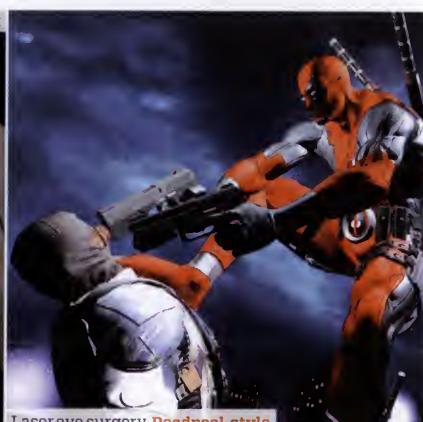
Service for the fans is fine, but we want this to be more memorable than the two that came before it.

Verdict



Deadpool

Suit up, shout out



The Pitch

An action game with attitude starring a fan-favourite character

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: TBA 2013

DISTRIBUTOR:

ACTIVISION

DEVELOPER: HIGH MOON

PLAYERS: 1 - TBA

Deadpool (the character) doesn't just break the fourth wall, he absolutely demolishes it. Marvel's 'merc with a mouth' stars in his own game, and he knows it.

The premise is that Deadpool has taken over a videogame studio, determined to make the greatest *Deadpool* game possible. As you control him, he'll let loose with quips and remarks on how well you're doing – whether it's good or bad. Oh, and voice of Deadpool? Nolan North, of course.

We haven't seen much of this in action, but the game hinges on whether you like the character, reveling in his brand of insanity and scattered approach to

combat, as he fires weapons before changing to katanas to take down opponents. Or, whether you think he's the epitome of a wider audience's frequent and insufferable craving for crassness.

High Moon are promising a game that challenges and embraces videogame conventions. One of Deadpool's abilities is regenerative health – stay with us here – but he loses limbs as he takes damage, until eventually there're none left. It'll be up to you to wait until your appendages grow back, or stick them back on.

High Moon's shown it can make games that are faithful to the source material, which makes us hopeful. More soon. **Paul Taylor**

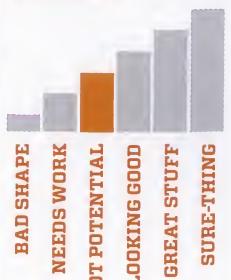
They Say

"My *Deadpool* game will feature all of my favorite things – katanas (check), big guns (and not just these amazing arm muscles) (check), crazy poop-your-pants action (check)."

We Say

So much of this hangs on Deadpool's attitude. No doubt he has the stuff gamers thrive on, but will it be too OTT to be OMG-this-is-good?

Verdict



Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee New N' Tasty!

Slig life

The Pitch

Fan-favourite platformer totally redone.

Info

FORMAT: PS3/PSV
GENRE: PLATFORMER
RELEASE: TBA 2013
DISTRIBUTOR: TBA
DEVELOPER: ODDWORLD
INHABITANTS: J.A.W
PLAYERS: 1

Classic PSOne platformer Abe's Oddysee is coming back, and it's being completely rebuilt. Rather than producing a standard (but good-looking) HD update that changes nothing in terms the game is played, Oddworld Inhabitants and Just Add Water – the team behind another Oddworld title, Stranger's Wrath, that was updated on the PSN – are ditching what came before and remaking the entire game from scratch.



Said 'what' too many times

Well, almost. The basic level structure will remain very familiar to anyone who played the 1997 original, but with new enemy locations amongst other changes. Although lead playable character Abe still moves in a 2D plane as he tries to escape Rupture Farms, and free as many of his fellow mudokons as he can along the way, the world has been built in 3D to take advantage of a major design change: scrolling screens.

The original had static, flipping screens, meaning you either had to know exactly what you wanted to do on the next screen before you got there. Now, as Abe picks up pace and runs across the screen, the camera tilts roughly 15 degrees and shifts sideways so you can see what's coming up next and adjust yourself accordingly. Since the screens no longer flip, enemies will reset after a cool down period of several seconds rather than stepping back to the screen before

Just Add Water are also tweaking some of the puzzles, and also overhauling the save system to make it more modern (read: frequent). Paul Taylor

They Say

"We are all excited about giving a new generation of gamers the opportunity to play Abe's Oddysee the way they deserve."

We Say

It's a fan-favourite title. We're happy about the new save system, but hope the puzzles don't lose their edge.

Verdict



Massive Doctor Who prize packs to be won!

Series 1 – 7 and a Sonic Screwdriver Universal Remote could be yours!

Thanks to BBC DVD we have a Tardis-full stack of Doctor Who prizes to give away, including a main prize valued at \$814.55, comprised of *Doctor Who Series 1 – 4* boxsets on DVD, *Series 5 – 6* boxsets on Blu-ray, *Series 7, Part 1* on Blu-ray, *Doctor Who: Complete Specials* on Blu-ray, and a Sonic Screwdriver Universal Remote.

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For your chance to win one of these superb prizes, answer the following question in 25 words or less and follow the entry instructions below:

Who would you like to see play the Doctor in the next series of *Doctor Who*, and why?

***Doctor Who: Series 7, Part 1* is in stores November 14 on Blu-ray and DVD**



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To enter this Official PlayStation Magazine – Australia competition email your entries to ops@citrusmedia.com.au with 'Doctor Who comp' in the subject line. Only one entry is allowed per person – multiple entries will be deleted. Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to **OPS Doctor Who Comp, Citrus Media, PO Box 20154, World Square, NSW 2002**. Please include your name, age, and addresses with your answers (email and postal). For postal entries please write all details on the back of the envelope. **Competitions close 19/12/2012**. Winners will be notified by mail.

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experience new ways to play

- Move objects and use gadgets
- Push blocks and solve puzzles
- Grapple, swing and control vehicles
- Take pictures to create unique stickers and decorations



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The 69 Sexiest times on a Sony

AS GAMING AUDIENCES HAVE MATURED, SO TOO HAS THE TECH GAMES DESIGNERS EMPLOY TO REPLICATE THE HUMAN FORM. BUT WHERE PHYSICS-BASED ANIMATION, 3D FACIAL CAPTURE AND GORE SYSTEMS ARE COMMONPLACE, TRUE ANATOMICAL CORRECTNESS IS SCARCE IN THE PLACES WHERE IT MATTERS MOST...

It's a shame really, because sexuality has been a part of every major form of expression throughout human history, from Paleolithic cave drawings to modern film. Since the dawn of the PSX, depictions of nudity and sex have very, very slowly started to become a part of the creative language of videogames.

'Look back to the early representations of 'digital sexy-time', and even the classier content is often marginalised, serving as fleeting periphery diversion. On the flip side, there were also burgeoning attempts to mimic the purely pornographic function seen in film and skin rags. The more adventurous of these were typically buried in the code as easter eggs, available only to a dedicated and horny few.'

Sexuality in gaming has progressed since then, but there are barriers and double-standards to overcome. Joy can be attached to a brutal headshot in any shooter today, but for some reason that same joy is shameful and embarrassed when applied to a sexual mechanic.

Using sex as an expressive tool in gaming – without fear of it being dismissed as salacious porn – is something that still eludes our medium. A true watershed moment is needed, but has yet to arrive.

Here for your edification is a (tastefully censored) pictorial chronicling of the most memorable scenes that pushed the envelope. These games didn't manage to topple taboo and get the industry to relax and nude-up more often; but they gave it a damn good shot... ▶

PSX THRILL KILL

Behold, the only fighting game we know of that had a nymphomaniac evil nurse. Banned for a reason?

PS3 FAIRY TALE FIGHTS

Featured very erect nipples on a naked cartoon Emperor. Kinky.

PS3 ASSASSIN'S CREED BROTHERHOOD

Ezio the stallion got his kit off with Caterina Sforza in this sex scene.

PS2 DARKWATCH

Had a vampire-on-human love scene. Its mo-cap session is still a High Moon Studio legend.

PS2 LEISURE SUIT LARRY: MAGNA CUM LAUDE

Terrible game, but Larry did get on the job in a giant Wood suit.

PS2 CANIS CADEM EDIT

Mini-game let you kiss the girls (or a boy). Ground-breaking stuff.

PSX TOMB RAIDER

A landmark foray into (pyramidal) polygonal breasts.

PS3 MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3

Arthur's all about the pants down.

FEAR EFFECT**ALPHA PROTOCOL****PS3 CATHERINE**

Featured a bunch of love scenes and saucy dialogue.

PS2 FIGHT CLUB

As a taunt, Bob would shake his man-boobs about. Hello, ladies.

PS3 ALPHA PROTOCOL

SIE takes 'full advantage' of you while you're restrained.

ASSASSIN'S CREED BROTHERHOOD

Ready to go again?

CATHERINE

I'm kinda jealous of you...

DARKWATCH

TAKE ALL OF ME.

STREET FIGHTER II

"HANA TAKES OFF HER TOWEL, TO 'FLASHBANG' AN ENEMY WITH HER BODY"

PS3 SOUL CALIBUR IV

Voldo's S&M-obsessed costumes. Taki's clothes were sprayed on.

PS3 ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

One of many RPGs that lets you strip your hardened adventurer.

PS3 BAYONETTA

Naked super moves a-go-go!

*Repeat
Offenders*

PS3 SAINTS ROW 2

Sex dungeon Easter Egg with inflatable dolls? Check.

PS3 SAINTS ROW: THE THIRD

A 'Sex appeal slider' for your character makes for epic man-bulge.

Repeat Offenders

PSX FEAR EFFECT

Hana takes off her towel to 'flashbang' an enemy with her body.

PSX FEAR EFFECT 2

A PlayStation first for polygonal girl-on-girl scenes.

BAYONETTA



SAINTS ROW: THE THIRD



CANIS CADEM EDIT



GTA: SAN ANDREAS



GTA: VICE CITY



and that's when I want to do the scene with the vat of mashed potatoes, but then we, uh -

Repeat Offenders

PS2 GTA III

Backseat action with the working girls of Liberty City.

PS2 GTA: VICE CITY

Jenna Jameson nails the portrayal of pornstar Candy SuXXX.

PS2 GTA: SAN ANDREAS

Had the infamous Hot coffee sex mini-game and a gimp suit.

PS3 GTA IV

Niko could score double topless lap-dances, had to pay extra.

PS3 GTA IV: LOST AND THE DAMNED

Full-frontal politician peen, on-screen.

"AS A TAUNT,
BOB WOULD
SHAKE HIS MAN-
BOOBS ABOUT.
HELLO, LADIES."

GTA: THE LOST AND DAMNED





Repeat Offenders

PSX METAL GEAR SOLID

The many bonus scenes with Meryl in her underpants.

PS2 METAL GEAR SOLID 2

Raiden was playable naked (there was no solid snake to speak of).

PS2 METAL GEAR SOLID 3

Eva and Naked Snake's flirtatious relationship.

PS3 METAL GEAR SOLID 4

Liquid Ocelot and Solid Snake shared a climactic man-kiss.

PSX RAMPAGE: WORLD TOUR

Epic shrinkage (as in, nudity, when your monster powers wear off).

PSX FINAL FANTASY VIII

That creepy dude gyrates at Cloud when he's disguised.

PS3 WE DARE

Had an oral-fixation mini-game that used a Move controller.

PS3 NO MORE HEROES

Jiggle that Move controller to get your sword...up, again.

PS3 JUST CAUSE 2

Had a Zeppelin full of strippers (male ones too, for once).

PS2 BMX XXX

Featured unlocked live-action videos of strippers. Game sucked.

PS2 PLAYBOY: THE MANSION

A one-stop shop for simulated shagging (pants on, however).

PS3 HEAVY RAIN

Interactive sex scene where taking off a bra was hard (just like real life).

PS2 FAHRENHEIT

David Cage's first sex mini-games before 'doing it' again *Heavy Rain*.



Repeat Offenders

PSX DEAD OR ALIVE

A bold pioneer for (very unrealistic) boob physics.

PS2 DEAD OR ALIVE 2: HARDCORE

Showed Kasumi fully naked in... liquid goo.

PS2 DEAD OR ALIVE: PARADISE

A happy-snap game featuring wall-to-wall bikinis and not much point.





"YOU COULD BUILD FISTO THE ROBOT AND THEN 'RUN SOME DIAGNOSTICS'."



Repeat Offenders

PS3 MASS EFFECT 2

Paragon pleasure with Liara, or Renegade style with Jack?

PS3 MASS EFFECT 3

The first iteration in the series to feature a gay option.

Repeat Offenders

PSN CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

Bare breasted succubuses (succubi?) suck you into your death.

PS2 CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE

The succubus obsession continued here with a saucy seduction scene.

METAL GEAR SOLID 2

PS3 FALLOUT 3

It takes you renting a room. Sleep in it, or don't. I don't care. I get paid either way.

PS2 AGGRESSIVE INLINE

For no discernable reason you were offered a female character in a short skirt. Big jumps ensued.

PS3 FALLOUT 3

Lady Killer perk not required here. All Nova wanted was 120 caps.

PS3 FALLOUT NEW VEGAS

You could build FISTO the robot and then 'run some diagnostics'.

PS3 THE SABOTEUR

Had a classy burlesque triple strip.

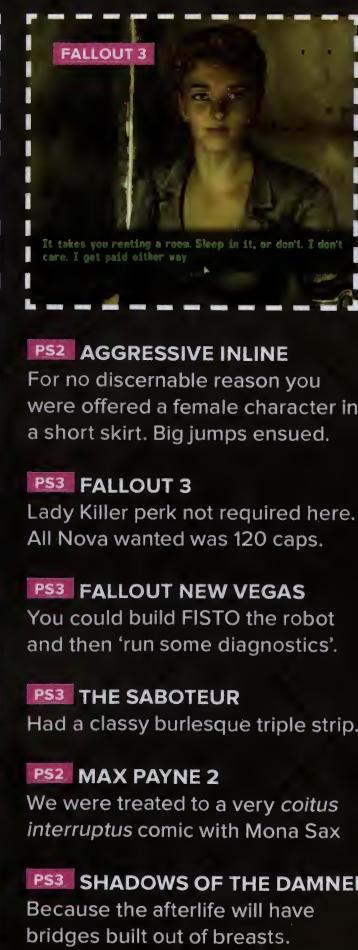
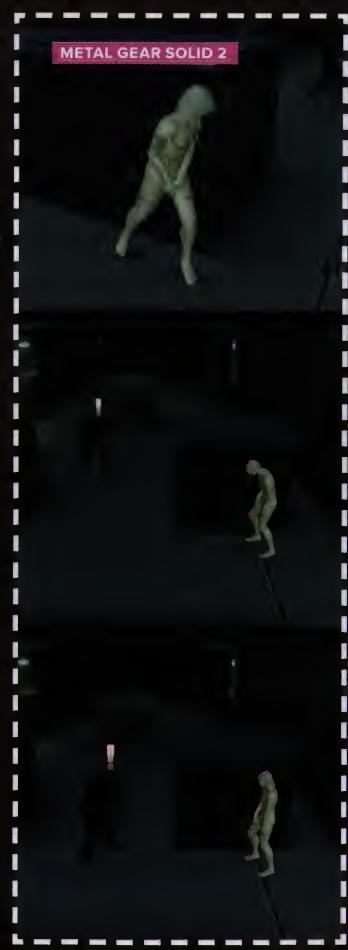
PS2 MAX PAYNE 2

We were treated to a very *coitus interruptus* comic with Mona Sax

PS3 SHADOWS OF THE DAMNED

Because the afterlife will have bridges built out of breasts.

MASS EFFECT 3



Repeat Offenders

PS2 DUKE NUKEM: PLANET OF THE BABES

End cinematic has Duke 'repopulating' the planet.

PS3 DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

Twins, heading well south of Duke's equator.

THE THIRD BIRTHDAY

Help her! Help Eve!

PS2 RUMBLE ROSES

Humiliation moves in the mud arena? Yeah, sure. It's a sport.

PSN STREET FIGHTER II

Pick your preference here – Chun Li's undies or Zangief's briefs.

PSN FLOWER

What?! Pollination is plants having hot, air-based sex. Look it up.

PS3 AR TONELICO QOGA:: KNELL OF AR CIEL

Included a suggestive scene where you had to 'remove' a crystal from Soma. Weird.

PSP THE THIRD BIRTHDAY

Body-possessing heroine, Aya Brea, spends a crazy amount of time in her 'third birthday suit'.

PS2 REZ

This game came with a 'Trance Vibrator'. Was only available in Japanese markets, obviously.

PSN DEATHSPANK: THONGS OF JUSTICE

Nailing Madame Primp 10 times for a trophy. Actually quite gross.

PS3 DANTE'S INFERNO

After a game full of naked wife scenes, Dante got in the buff too.

PSN CHO ANIKI

Constant scenes of wall-to-wall, side-scrolling man-flesh. Oh, those wacky Japanese.

THRILL KILL

THIS DAMAGE TOTAL



TOMB RAIDER

ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

Courier

SOUL CALIBUR IV

RUMBLE ROSES

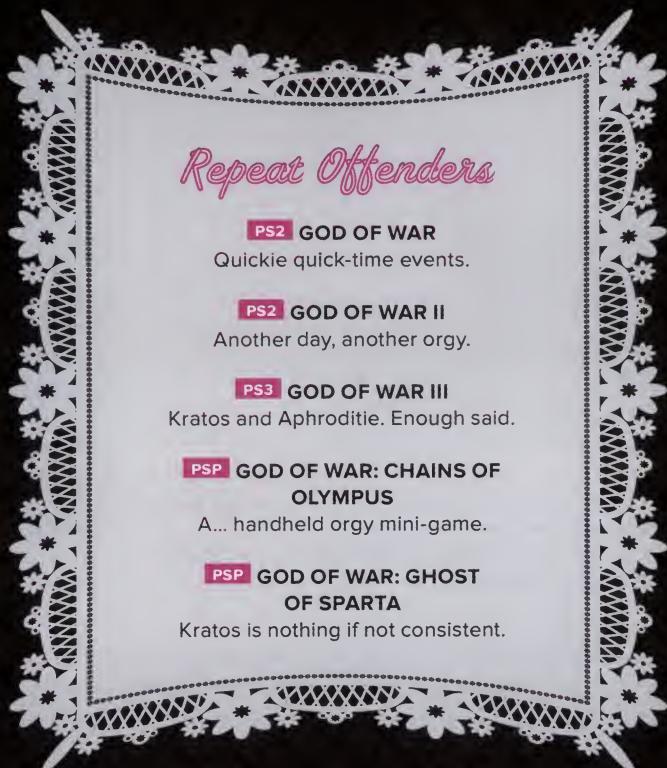
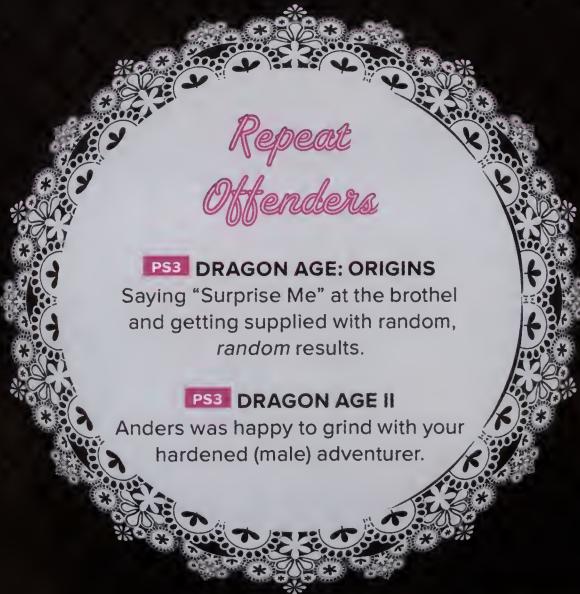
Repeat Offenders

PS3 THE DARKNESS

Makin' out with Jenny on the couch. Sensual.

PS3 THE DARKNESS II

Featured a seedy brothel environment with a lot of 'motion-captured' performances.



"BODY-POSSESSING HEROINE, AYA, SPENDS A LOT OF TIME IN HER 'THIRD BIRTHDAY SUIT'"



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GO BACK TO RUSSIA

2010'S *METRO 2033*, WAS BREATHTAKING FOR ABSOLUTELY EVERY PERSON THAT PLAYED IT - NO EXCEPTIONS. ITS INTENSE URBAN SPELUNKING AND GRITTY, POST-APOCALYPTIC ATMOSPHERE TOOK THE BREATH AWAY FROM PLAYERS THAT LOVED THAT SORT OF THING. PEOPLE WHO HATED IT HAD MUCH THE SAME RESULT WHEN THEY TRIED TO PLAY IT LIKE COD, ONLY TO BE ASPHYXIATED WHEN THEIR GASMASK GOT SHOT TO HELL. *METRO: LAST LIGHT* CONTINUES THAT HOLEY TRADITION...

Given a chance, Metro 2033 was a more-than-capable shooter, set in a 'Soviet Russian subway, where next station stops YOU'. The humans inhabiting this world are bent as the communist sickle and the mutants harder than the hammer that crosses it. *Metro: Last Light* is worth the return ticket price.

The aforementioned *Call of Duty* cross-section will probably dislike this less-than-mainstream follow-up even more than the first. With full blessing from its THQ overlord, developer 4A Games intends not to water-down the experience to suit the semi-casual, twitch-shooter crowd who like their explosions constant, and their health regenerated. In stark contrast, *Last Light* is going to be every bit a lean, hardcore first-person experience that has its sights firmly affixed on the mature, sophisticated gamer's gamer.

For those of you new to the series, here are some cheat sheets on how the world ended horribly. Thanks to a nuclear war sometime in the early 2000s, Mother Russia has been given one hell of a makeover. A great many of Moscow's residents were lucky enough to go to ground in the city's labyrinthine subway system, something that's protected them from the thermonuclear fire and the inevitable radiation bath that followed.

Metro 2033 opened with the narration (and discount English dubbing) of Artyom, an orphaned Russian man born just days before the world got a page-one rewrite. Without spoiling too much of his tale, Artyom was drawn into a quest to save his hometown – or 'station' – from the encroaching forces of a new breed of psychic mutants known only as the Dark Ones.

Accompanied by elite members of a soldier faction called the Rangers, Artyom journeyed through a variety of

lethal areas of the Metro, including haunted tunnels hungry for the living, Communist stations engaged in an ideological war with their Nazi neighbours, and even some topside excursions into the twisted skeleton of the mutant-filled Moscow itself.

Once Artyom managed to rally some powerful, ex-military allies to his cause against the Dark Ones, the player was handed a climactic choice, and then two endings corresponding to that decision.

Moving into the sequel, Artyom is no longer the wide-eyed, wet-behind-the-ears, scared-shitless teenager who left his station seriously unprepared for the world. He's a man who has seen allies ripped apart by a hideous array of mutants, he's haunted by unexplained phenomena, and has been irreparably scarred by the psychic assaults of the Dark Ones. All credit to him for surviving, but he's basically a poster-child for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder now.

His mental state isn't helped by the fact that the generation of humans he's sacrificed everything to protect – the 40,000 odd souls who could well be the last on earth – are still intent on destroying one another. Along with the usual dregs of humanity that you can find in most modern urban sprawls (looters, rapists, bandits, people who pronounce it "aks" instead of "ask"), the

Metro is still home to Nazis, Commies, and possibly mutated Commie-Nazis. Lording it above all of them are the so-called good guys, the Rangers, who are now in command of a lot of lethal old-world military tech. ▶

BETTER OFF DEAD THAN RED?

DE WAS THE MILITARY INSTALLATION THAT THE RANGERS, ALONG WITH THE HELP OF ARTYOM, DISCOVERED IN THE SECOND ACT OF METRO 2033. AFTER POKING AROUND IN THE RECORDS, THE RANGERS HAVE DISCOVERED THAT THE REDS (THE METRO'S RESIDENT COMMIES) HAVE GOTTEN THEIR HANDS ON A BIO-WEAPON. TURNS OUT THESE SLIPPERY COSSACK SUCKHOLES HAVE BEEN USING IT IN A NEFARIOUS PLAN TO TAKE OVER THE REMNANTS OF HUMANITY. THEY SECRETLY RELEASE THE DEADLY VIRUS IN ANY NEIGHBOURING STATION THAT ISN'T ALLIED TO THEM, THEN THEY MOVE IN, QUARANTINE THE AREA, TAKE IT OVER, CURE THE AFFLICTED AND ABSORB A NEW SECTION OF THE METRO THAT NOW SEES THEM AS SAVIOURS.

"MOVING INTO THE SEQUEL, ARTYOM IS NO LONGER THE WIDE-EYED, WET-BEHIND-THE-EARS, SCARED-SHITLESS TEENAGER WHO LEFT HIS STATION SERIOUSLY UNPREPARED FOR THE WORLD."



"DE, BUT I AM NEEDING, HOW-YOU-SAY... SPINNERS!"



METRO: Last Light



ABOVE

WORKING TOILETS WERE HIGHLY-PRIZED IN THE POST-APOCALYPSE





Returning into gameplay (after a quick recap of the E3 demo) Artyom is hanging out with his old partner in crime, Andrew. The fellow survivor of a recent brush with death (in which angry poltergeists tried to make our two heroes choke themselves to death in a passenger jet wreckage) is excited to unveil a railcar to Artyom. Mad Max would definitely approve of this bad-boy. It looks like part V8 Interceptor, part minecart pimped out with more light bulbs than a Kebab selling caravan.

Borrowing the fantabulous contraption and bidding Andrew adieu, we rattle off into the oppressive blackness of the metro. Once again we're impressed by the shadow and lighting systems in the rejigged 4A engine. The rays of light produced from our doner kebabmobile only pierce so far. As the beams stretch ominous shadows in front of us, the dust particle effects make it so you can almost taste the airborne grit.

Despite much rectal puckering, we reach our destination without too much incident. We disentangle ourselves, pull on our gasmask, and try to find a way to power on a generator. We tear through a sticky wall of spiderwebs to find a crusty old maintenance area. It's here that the auditory delights of *Last Light* make themselves known. A spine-chilling skittering noise causes us to wheel about and catch a

glimpse of an unknown horror pushing itself into a crack in the wall, desperate to escape our shoulder lamp. Soon after, a slimy popping alerts us to a clutch of eggs near our feet. We hose it down with our machine gun before the contents can be identified. The silence that follows is deafening.

Feeling the need to get the task done as soon as possible, we burn our way through the web walls and do our best to ignore the strung up, not quite immobile human corpses hanging in the next room like piñatas. As we're looking for the switch to the generator, the ol' gaming kleptomania urges kick in, and we start to scoop up precious ammunition and gasmask filters.

We've half forgotten the danger of our predicament when the scorpion-spiders make their assault. In a happy coincidence, we still have our lighter equipped and in a knee jerk reaction we set their leader on fire. This turns out to be the preferred method, as

these little bastards are armour-plated and fairly resilient to most lead-based attacks. Flipping a nearby switch triggers a generator and the lights. On the one hand, it's a great idea because the light causes the horrors to shriek and run away. The downside: we get a better look at just how colonized this area is with them, and how grotesque their half-eaten victims look. ▶

NEW SYSTEMS

THOUGH DETAILS ARE SKETCHY, LAST LIGHT MAY JUST GET POST-LAUNCH CO-OP MULTIPLAYER FUNCTIONALITY. ALSO, ARTYOM'S WATCH IS SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT IN LAST LIGHT, BUT THE GAS MASK/FILTER SYSTEM IS TO BE KEPT THE SAME. MORAL POINTS ARE TO BE INCLUDED, POSSIBLY HINTING AT ANOTHER DOUBLE ENDING DECISION. THE STEALTH AND TRADING SYSTEMS WILL BE RELATIVELY UNCHANGED, AND ALONG WITH HAND-CRANKING POWER INTO YOUR LIGHT, YOU MUST ALSO HIT A BUTTON TO WIPE RAIN AND EXCESS GORE FROM YOUR GASMASK GOGGLES. MMM, CHUNKY.

"A SPINE-CHILLING SKITTERING NOISE CAUSES US TO WHEEL ABOUT TO CATCH A GLIMPSE OF AN UNKNOWN HORROR PUSHING ITSELF INTO A CRACK IN THE WALL."

Backtracking through the claustrophobic corridors, we eventually return to our ride and open up a new path with the help of our newfound electricity supply. Operating the same hand crank that must be used every once in a while to massage energy into our shoulder lamp, we divert some juice into a gate that groans open. The railcar chugs along and ascends towards ground level, all the while shadowy figures skitter, scratch and peek into our tunnel, obviously tailing our every movement. The tunnel opens up into a midnight rainstorm (possibly acid-based). Our wonder at this broken vista soon turns to dread when we realise that our vehicle must look like a neon, all-you-can-eat human buffet to the winged demons that rule Moscow. Our gameplay section ends here – and not well.

With jellied legs we walk away from our glimpse of *Last Light* with a grin on our face. Though a bit underfunded and rough around the edges, *Metro 2033* was a narrative-driven shooter that showed a lot of promise

"ALL THE WHILE SHADoWY FIGURES SKITTER, SCRATCH AND PEEK INTO OUR RAIL TUNNEL, OBVIOUSLY TAILING OUR EVERY MOVEMENT"

– potential that's being better realised here. Outside of the ball-tighteningly scary combat and exploration sections, 4A Games has remained dedicated to the expositional hub areas where you can dig for as much, or as little, backstory as you want. Forget reams of loading screen text, and made-to-order cutscenes; the many ramshackle communities, infirmaries and enemy hideouts are living and breathing places. You might hear interesting info leading to items, or get severely grifted.

For those after multiplayer – a whinge that was regularly directed at *Metro 2033* – the answer to whether it'll be in *Last Light* is complex. In a recent blog post 4A Games has announced that this sequel is on track to not ship with multiplayer. Originally a small team had been working on various multiplayer ideas but after E3 that dedicated team merged with the single-player group to focus 100% of the studio's resources on providing the best campaign experience possible. This was apparently due to the response that, while there was interest shown about the idea of multiplayer in the game, people were more interested in getting their solo on.

4A also stated that it's interested in implementing multi, post-release. The team are still keeping hush-hush about what the details of that multiplayer mode would be.

Personally, we're not especially upset about that. We're chomping at the bit to see how Artyom's adventure will play out in the single-player campaign, but whether we'll see said ending is dependent on whether the constricting sense

of claustrophobia, bites to the jugular from mutants, or phantom fingers of several million angry souls don't choke us out before we can see the credits. Either way, you'd be silly not be making tracks towards the Metro

SO HOW DID METRO 2033 END?

AS IF THE TITLE OF THIS BOXOUT DIDN'T WARN YOU ENOUGH - HERE BE SPOILER COUNTRY. FANS OF THE GAME, OR TROPHY WHORES OUT FOR EVERYTHING THEY COULD GET, WILL TELL YOU THAT METRO 2033 HAD TWO ENDINGS. THE MOST COMMON ENDING PEOPLE SAW WAS ARTYOM WORKING HIS WAY TO D6 AND USING A MISSILE TARGETING SYSTEM TO WIPE THE DARK ONES OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH. THE OTHER OPTION SAW A DARK ONE ARRIVING AT THE TOWER BENEATH ARTYOM IN A BID TO BROKER AN INTER-SPECIES PEACE, WHICH CAUSED OUR HERO TO SPARE THEM.

SEEMS LIKE THE HIPPIE MUNG3ANS ENDING HAS BEEN DITCHED IN FAVOUR OF A GOOD OLD-FASHIONED PSYCHIC-MUTANT BARBECUE. THE JURY'S OUT ON WHETHER OR NOT ALL OF THE DARK ONES GOT CRISPED. SOME FANS ARE SPECULATING THAT ARTYOM'S FREQUENT AND OFTEN DANGEROUS HALLUCINATIONS ARE BEING BROUGHT ABOUT BY VENGEFUL DARK ONE SURVIVORS. JERKS.

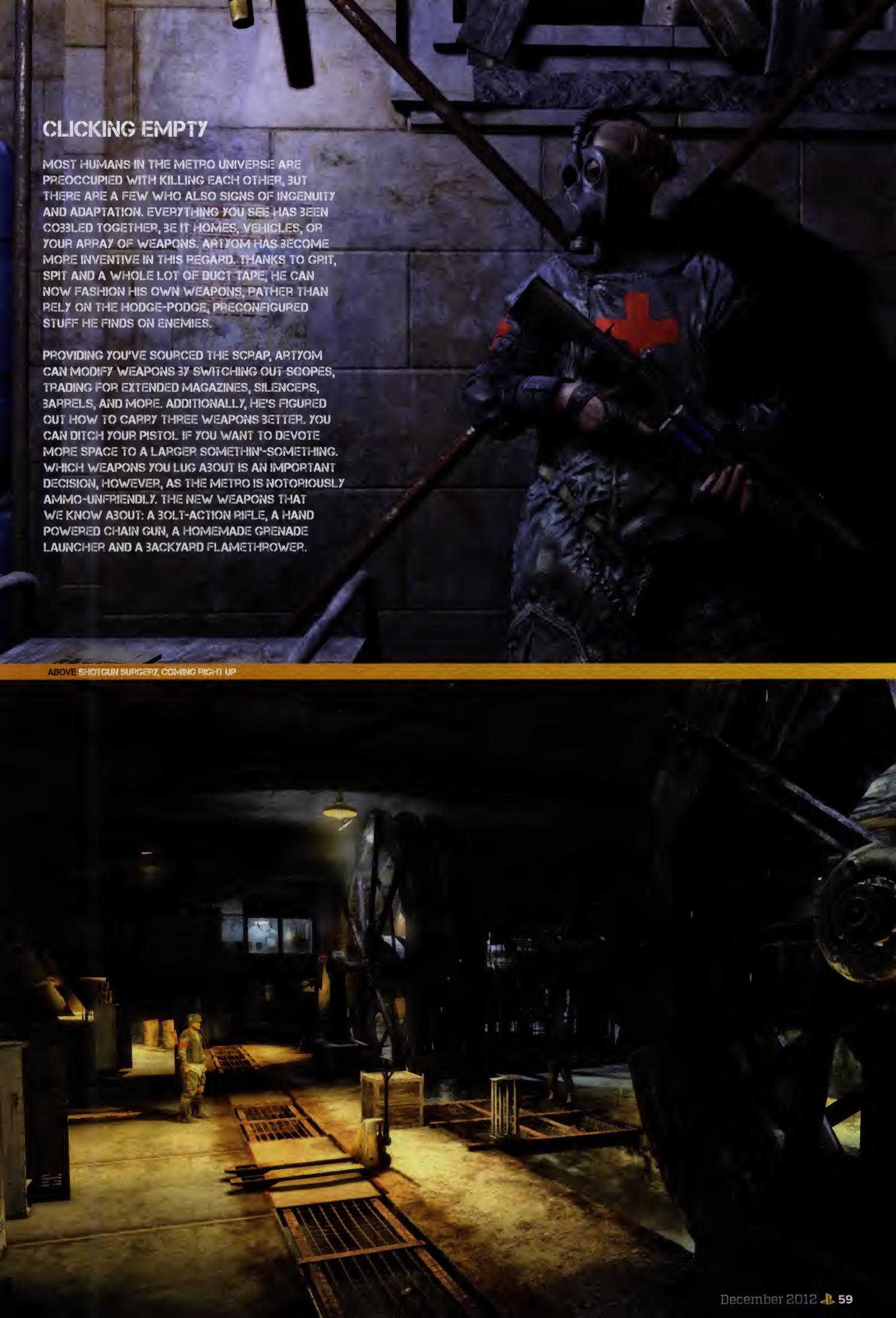


CLICKING EMPTY

MOST HUMANS IN THE METRO UNIVERSE ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH KILLING EACH OTHER, BUT THERE ARE A FEW WHO ALSO SIGNS OF INGENUITY AND ADAPTATION. EVERYTHING YOU SEE HAS BEEN COBBLED TOGETHER, BE IT HOMES, VEHICLES, OR YOUR ARRAY OF WEAPONS. ARTYOM HAS BECOME MORE INVENTIVE IN THIS REGARD. THANKS TO GRIT, SPIT AND A WHOLE LOT OF DUCT TAPE, HE CAN NOW FASHION HIS OWN WEAPONS, RATHER THAN RELY ON THE HODGE-Podge, PRECONFIGURED STUFF HE FINDS ON ENEMIES.

PROVIDING YOU'VE SOURCED THE SCRAP, ARTYOM CAN MODIFY WEAPONS BY SWITCHING OUT SCOPES, TRADING FOR EXTENDED MAGAZINES, SILENCERS, BARRELS, AND MORE. ADDITIONALLY, HE'S FIGURED OUT HOW TO CARRY THREE WEAPONS BETTER. YOU CAN DITCH YOUR PISTOL IF YOU WANT TO DEVOTE MORE SPACE TO A LARGER SOMETHIN'-SOMETHIN'. WHICH WEAPONS YOU LUG ABOUT IS AN IMPORTANT DECISION, HOWEVER, AS THE METRO IS NOTORIOUSLY AMMO-UNFRIENDLY. THE NEW WEAPONS THAT WE KNOW ABOUT: A BOLT-ACTION RIFLE, A HAND POWERED CHAIN GUN, A HOMEMADE GRENADE LAUNCHER AND A BACKYARD FLAMETHROWER.

ABOVE SHOTGUN SURGERY, COMING RIGHT UP



A black and white photograph of a man in a graduation cap and gown, pointing his finger at the screen of an open laptop. He is wearing a dark jacket over his graduation attire.

KNOW HOW TO USE A COMPUTER?

Connect with other PS3 gamers
and the team at Official PlayStation
Magazine - Australia at:
www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia

in review



► GAME OF THE MONTH

Hitman: Absolution

The baddest bald egg of the bunch returns to crack some heads

Review ratings

10 **Incredible:** Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.

9 **Excellent:** An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.

8 **Great:** Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 **Good:** A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 **Decent:** This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 **Mediocre:** A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

4 **Poor:** Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

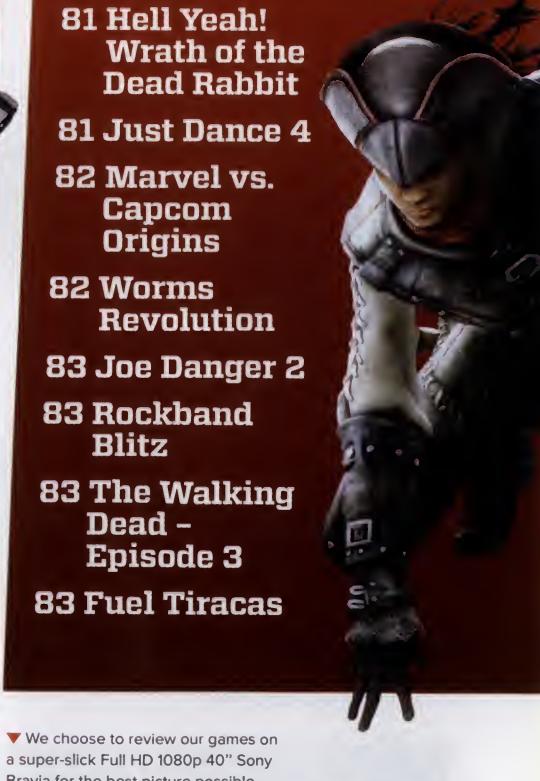
3 **Very disappointing:** Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 **Terrible:** Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

1 **The worst:** Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. OPS has handed out this score only once.

This Month

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▼ We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.



"You there, lickspittle. Chart a course for the frigate and bring me another" *mutiny begins*



Assassin's Creed III

Birth a nation, kill every bastard in it



Full credit where credit is due: *Assassin's Creed III* is an amazing and ambitious sequel. But in order to enjoy it fully, you must learn the following eight word phrase and chant it every once and a while: "That was just a glitch in the Animus".

We guarantee you'll know when it comes time to say it.

Have you played an hour without graphical incident, only to see a phantom musket and/or sword hovering in the air? That's an Animus glitch – or possibly an obscure reference to *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*. Perhaps you may have tried to tomahawk a redcoat off a roof but got thwarted when his butt-cheeks became bonded to the guttering? Animus again. Did you try fast-travelling to the frontier only to see one tree that, for a full 10 seconds, looked like a spot on watercolour painting? Oh snap, you been Animused, son.

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION-

ADVENTURE

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

DEVELOPER:

UBISOFT MONTREAL

PLAYERS: 1-16

RRP: \$89.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
BIGGER WORLD, BLOODIER
KILLS, BON VOYAGES



Thankfully, the aforementioned examples were isolated incidents; rare WTs sprinkled throughout the inherited irregularities of this franchise. Like the AC predecessors, Ubisoft is still super-casual about spawning pedestrians like there's an invisible Stargate placed somewhere between you and the horizon.

It's nothing fans haven't seen before, nor anything a reasonable newcomer can't ignore after 10 minutes. But it is noteworthy info for the graphics whore who'll dive in expecting this new Anvil Next engine to be faultless, only to be found much later on, rocking in the foetal position and gibbering the phrase "the Animus, just the Animus".

We freely admit it – *ACIII* has niggling visual blemishes. But we also admit they're massively outweighed by the new features that Ubisoft has spent three years implementing, hoping to combat franchise fatigue. The bottom line is this: we loved every minute of playing through this sequel. Random warts and all.

A lot of that affection stems from the American Revolution setting, not to mention the grit, spit, and Brit-slittin' skills of all-new protagonist, Connor. After a rather lengthy, and stylishly executed, introductory chapter, you'll be weened on a few linear missions as our young Mohawk-English assassin. Truth be told, the first quarter of *AC III* offers little in



"I see your vanilla macaron, and raise you a Mint Pattie"



the way of free-wheeling sandbox action. Ordinarily that'd be a huge negative, but the training wheels are warranted. There are many new mechanics to grasp, and older ones to relearn.

The biggest change, but also the easiest to acclimatise to, is the rejigged free-running system. No longer must you hasten arthritis by making the 'Assassin's Creed claw' (holding **A** and **X**) to move and climb at top speed. **B** is all you need, and Connor now accelerates, switches directions and threads crowds like a buttered fox.

Additionally, every climb's sublime thanks to an organic revamp of the parkour system. Whether you're flitting from forest floor to canopy, or pinballing across the rooftops of New York and Boston, Connor's 'safe climbing' all but eliminates the noobish need to randomly jump to your death. If you do wish to act the lemming, you need only tap the **X** button to take some risks. Frankly, we haven't been this impressed with a traversal mechanic since Ubisoft set the bar all those years ago with the original *Assassin's Creed*.

Not as ingenious, rather copied and adapted, is Connor's new combat system. It's an offense-heavy four button array that relies on melee, projectile, counter and guard-breaks. The rhythm required to use it is not unlike that of *Batman: Arkham City*. But whereas Bats showed restraint, Connor will flat-out butcher Bostonians and Bambi alike with his stunning array of horrific and contextual kill animations.

To dispense that death, Ubisoft has

given Connor quite an arsenal. Along with practically every gadget from the previous games (bombs, hidden blades, etc), Connor's tomahawk, rope dart, flintlock pistol and bow are his go-to murder tools. Using the tomahawk is self-explanatory, but the other projectile weapons, while devastating, can be a little cumbersome.

Equipped to **A**, the pistol, or a borrowed musket can auto-lock on a victim and be unloaded upon button release. That awesome one-shot, insta-kill

power is reined in by low ammo counts, and you could build a small log cabin in the time it takes to reload.

The bow is a weaker, faster-firing option, but using it to hunt in ACII's ludicrously vast wilderness can be frustrating. **B** offers a free-aim of sorts that will only ever draw the bow if have a critter highlighted white by your

"Connor now accelerates, switches directions and threads crowds like a buttered fox"



"They called me stupid when I named this 'Fort Explosion', but look who's laughing n- "BOOM"



very small targeting reticule. Firstly, this is problematic when trying to loose a quick arrow at a moving target. Secondly, once you do lock to a target's centre-mass you're expected to bend your aim to the animal's head, which is awkward at best.

Your chances of bagging a kill are increased by hiding in shrubbery 'stealth areas', but even with those we found the whole setup fiddly and redundant. Though the game penalised us with crapper rewards, we found better success from divebombing out of trees. Assassinating a grizzly is something every gamer worth their salt must experience.

Speaking of salty must-sees, Connor regularly sprouts his sea legs and commandeers a warship. In these cannonball runs you're given full rudder and sail control and a variety of offensive options. Broadside the ever-loving crap out of an armada is thrilling stuff that requires no small amount of skill. Fail to read rogue winds right, or mistime shots into the waves, and you'll earn your crew one-way vacations to the crustaceans.

Unfortunately, the many naval missions aren't full sandbox affairs, but you're given quite a long leash, plus a bunch of interesting locales and engagement types. Seafaring appears sporadically in the 10-hour campaign, but we guarantee you'll want to peel off whenever they become available as side-missions. The gorgeous water tech, the bustling sense of life on your ship, and swashbuckling boardings are powerful lures indeed.

The ship is just the tip of the side-diversion iceberg. The brotherhood mechanic returns and will have you happily securing districts and training psychopaths 'til the mad cows come home. Better yet, it seems the Assassins now operate via a hive-mind. You can manage your minion missions wherever you are in the world – no more running to coops and getting poop on your hands.

You can also turn your quest for justice into *The Block: Brotherhood Edition* thanks to the returning 'Villa' renovation mini-game. Connor's homestead and staff can be steadily improved. Plus the raw materials your artisans gather can be used in crafting, or sold on in a free-trading system that has all the risk-reward addictiveness of brotherhood management. Your stores can be supplemented by the many, many hunting opportunities in Connor's backyard. Tracking clues, setting snares and gutting defenceless beasts provides a fun, if repetitive, challenge for any budding indoor-outdoorsman.

Stopping to smell the roses is its own reward, but problems arise if you wish to get to a distant somewhere instantly, as the world is divided into four main chunks; Homestead, Frontier, Boston and New York, and fast-travelling between them is rarely an A to B affair. It's A to B to C to D (or worse) with long load times between each point. Things get marginally better if you travel by ship, but even then it can get needlessly convoluted.



The assassin's creed: serve the light, strike from darkness, make the odd shadow puppet

"This withering franchise has been allowed to bloom once more"

When you do eventually get to that mission marker, *ACIII* rarely disappoints. From the slow-burn beginning of the game (sorry, bad pun, people die in fires), Connor's exploits ramp up into amazing set-piece moments.

When it wants to, the Anvil Next engine can render vast battlefields packed to the hills with ranks upon ranks of redcoats. It can also tear a city apart with offshore cannon fire as you scurry to avoid copping a clock tower in the back of the head. The moments *ACIII* offers are without a doubt unlike anything we've seen in the series before.

Ubisoft has adequately captured the sense of scale and destruction of the bloody birth of America; but we're more impressed with how they've woven the Templars into that history. Without spoiling too much, it would have been a lazy solution to simply cast the (future) Americans as Assassins supporters, and the British as the evil, tea-sipping Templars. It was refreshing to see that some allegiances were not black and white, and that allies and arch-enemies were changable.

The writers even managed to make

the Desmond sections interesting, filled with purpose and with a decent amount of blood-letting, too.

Admittedly, this was not our favourite *Assassin's Creed* plot-line, nor is the fairly wooden Connor our favourite killer, but *ACIII* is a more-than-satisfying tale. Our thoughts on the graphical overhaul are the opposite. Despite some forgivable bugbears, no entry in the *Assassin's Creed* series has ever looked, handled, or had the power to capture our imagination quite as well as *ACIII*.

Ubisoft has suggested some plot threads may end in this iteration, but we don't think the end is anywhere in sight. Thanks to the sizeable engine update and an era shift in *Assassin's Creed III*, this withering franchise has been allowed to bloom once more.

There's a good chance it could grow even more beautiful, providing Ubisoft can resist the urge to mass-produce half-sequels and get a firmer grip on Anvil Next's graphical executions. Until that happens, we'll happily work on our own graphical executions in this, a serious contender for GOTY 2012. **Adam**

Mathew

Multi-murderin', co-op killin'

Just as the single-player has expanded into bold new frontiers, so too has *ACIII*'s multiplayer modes. The option we kept coming back to the most was Wolf Pack, where 2 - 4 players are tasked with killing certain NPCs in a time limit, through a sequence of 25 stages. It's a great addition and we love it.

Another worthy new mode is Domination, a team-based affair where Abstergo recruits will need to capture areas of the virtual map they are on, before protecting them from the opposite team. Quality stuff.

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Overflowing with moments of pure gorgeousness and big-budget spectacle. Offset by 'Animus' pop-in for incidental character models and texture detail.

SOUND Connor isn't the most emotive fellow in the world, and he's regularly outshone by the supporting cast. Stirring score with great Native American influences.

CONTROLS Ship controls are great, combat is fluid and offers challenge. Hunting with projectiles could do with more third-person shooting, and less 'Animus puppeteering system'.

REPLAY VALUE A 10 hour speed run will cover 33% of the game. After that there's a massive array of side-quests and co-op / adversarial multiplayer that feels anything but tacked on.

Verdict

Undeniably a sizeable, Assassin's leap past our expectations. A shame then, that the landing is a bit wobbly in spots.

9



Log: made of wood, better than bad it's good

Try to install some speed holes and **The Man gets up in your grille**

Hitman: Absolution

The infamous bald-faced bald-headed assassin returns

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: STEALTH / ACTION

RELEASE: MA15+

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: IO
INTERACTIVE

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$89.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
SPLINTER CELL

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." Don't fret; we haven't become a religious sect in the space of a page turn that's about to ask you to robe up and drink 'mind-opening' Kool-Aid. That opening line is the English translation of the Latin lyrics of Ave Maria: that beautifully sung hymn that is synonymous with a particularly infamous bald-headed assassin.

Surprisingly, the lyrics aren't actually too wrong; especially in the instance of *Hitman: Absolution*. "Hail Mary" can apply to any number of the miraculous hits or escapes we performed, while "full of grace"

applies to our victims as long as you replace "grace" with "lead". The only problem with "the Lord is with thee" is it's backwards. It should be "thou are with the Lord" because many a wrongdoer (and possibly a few innocent folks) were dispatched to bring you this review.

Considering the last *Hitman* game to land on a Sony system was the *Hitman Triple Pack* – a bundle of the second, third and fourth titles – a lot has happened in terms of the story arc. The long and short of it is conspiracy, betrayal and a tonne of murder. *Hitman: Absolution* initially feels like it throws you in the deep

end – considering your first mission is to assassinate a colleague who's saved your life once before but is now rogue – but it does a solid job of getting you back up to speed and into Agent 47's dark and grimy world. In fact, the narrative is one of the strongest parts of an impressive offering, so much so that we don't want to ruin even the early plot twists and turns. In its simplest form, Agent 47 has blood on his hands, he's in charge of keeping an innocent safe and there are a lot of people out there trying to kill him. The solution? Kill them first.

There may not be 50 of them, but *Hitman: Absolution* absolutely nails the modern gaming trope of presenting oodles of gameplay choice. It would be an insult to polarise *Absolution* into 'stealth' or 'action', when the real beauty of the game is found in the fertile grey area between the two.

'Stealth for violence' is probably the best way to define *Absolution*, because the game is constantly encouraging you to flex your ninja prowess and resist the urge to go in guns blazing. That's not to say you can't blast your way from start to finish – a tactic we attempted and succeeded with on more than one occasion – it's just frowned upon. Most importantly, you're missing out on what *Absolution* really has to offer if you – as our PR contact astutely pointed out – "play it like it's *Call of Duty*." *Absolution* grades you on how



"And then my concentration was broken by an amputee Rover bent over"



“The beautiful thing about *Absolution* is that **it’s always teaching you; and, better still, challenging you”**

'well' you've completed a level. This isn't a pokies-lever end-of-mission surprise affair, either; every significant action you perform in the game adds points in rapturous white or deducts them in judgemental red. Basically, the fineprint reads, 'You'll be playing this level again to improve your score.'

Trophy junkies, completionists and any other folk that take offence to having red on their end-of-level ledger are bound to get caught up in the beautiful frustration of replaying levels. This is saying something, considering our playthrough clocked in at around 12 hours. The beautiful thing about *Absolution* is that it's always teaching you; and, better still, challenging you to do better. It starts with a prologue – a training mission, for all intents and purposes – that does a fantastic job of teaching you everything you need to know about the core mechanics of the game, while immersing you in a layered narrative from the get-go.

Agent 47 may look like a walking oxymoron with his bald head, piercing blue eyes and a barcode randomly tattooed to the back of his head, but he's a killer through and through.

and IO Interactive empowers you to this end from the start. Tactical possibilities are the name of the game, and as your skills progress and subsequent levels subtly train you in new assassin techniques, you end up like a kid standing in front of an all-you-can-eat dessert buffet.

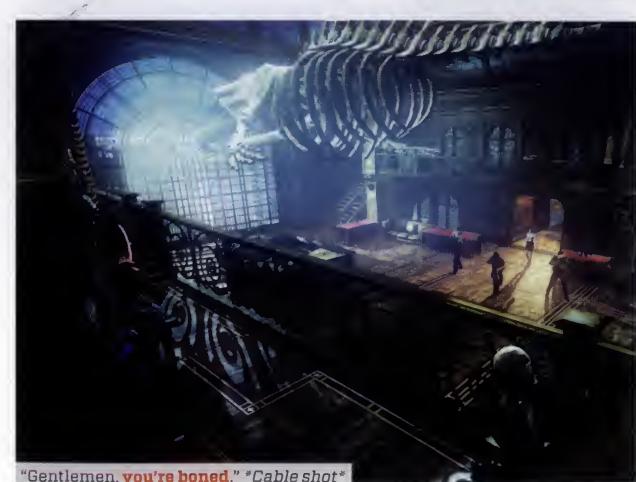
You can blast your way from start to finish. You can steal an outfit or alternate outfits to access different areas of a map. You can try a patented Agent 47 'Signature Kill' and devise grisly deaths via seemingly spontaneous combustion, collapsing light fixtures or other freak accidents. Distract guards with radio sets, bottles, or the spilt blood of their fallen comrades. All of these methods can be used to achieve these ends, and that's just the shortlist.

Purists will be hell bent on completing missions without shedding Agent 47's signature black suit but, for the rest of us, switching outfits is a must. This isn't a new addition to the *Hitman* series, but it's made all the more interesting by the inclusion of the all-new Instinct mechanic. In its simplest form, holding **I** to activate Instinct is crucial when choosing the



Difficulty

Easy is a cakewalk and best avoided by any player with an iota of skill. Normal is challenging as hell in a lot of parts, and there are more guards than Easy; of particular note, the extra guards placed in overwatch positions that make planning the stealthy routes tougher. For gluttons of misery, there are also Hard, Expert and Purist difficulties which don't just have harder enemies and lower player life, they also take away abilities such as checkpoints!





Mission Exceptional

Spawned from the forum-based community challenges of *Hitman: Blood Money, Contracts* greatly extends the replayability of *Absolution* by letting players create or complete *Contracts* set by friends, the community or handpicked by IO Interactive. Players create challenges by tagging up to three enemies and setting their exit point. The challenge comes when the game records the costume you're wearing at the time of the kill, the weapon used, whether there were any witnesses and if the bodies were hid.

mission was to assassinate the so-called King of Chinatown. We finished it in two minutes. This isn't a bragging point, nor is it a detractor from the length of *Hitman: Absolution*; instead, it highlights just how quickly and efficiently you can finish particular missions if you so desire. After all, the end result of your mission is assassinating a target and fleeing an area; the rest is just details.

The real beauty of this mission, though, was the introduction to IO Interactive's second-to-none crowd technology. A back-entry starting point gave way to a crowd of hundreds of people; each with their own unique look and believable crowd behaviour. The crowd made running impossible, but they also enable players to track prey or lose pursuers in the moving cover system. There was the odd clipping problem but, for the most part, it works

fantastically. Further into the game, the moving-cover of everyday folk was complemented by rows of marijuana plants and, later, a ready-to-harvest field of crops. There's something to be said about losing pursuing cops in rows of weed, or stalking guards while dressed as a scarecrow in a beautifully rendered field of corn.

While it feels that IO Interactive is regularly nudging you towards a particular play style – usually stealthy – there's an immense level of satisfaction in the missions that grate against action-heavy play styles. One particular level in a rundown library filled with cops searching for us was a memorable highlight. Shifting between cover, clambering between levels and trying our hardest to avoid combat was one of the tensest experiences of the game (of which there were many). This tension was sent into overdrive when,

backed into a corner, we punched our way out, only to accidentally knock our attacker over a railing. Whoops. You won that round, ragdoll physics. The best thing about *Hitman: Absolution* is that moments of emergent narrative – player-influenced mini-stories – like this are waiting around every corner.

Unfortunately, within the beauty of dynamic player-empowering moments is also the biggest frustration of *Hitman: Absolution*. The goddamn checkpoint system. Even on Normal difficulty – which, for the record, is still damn tough – a lot of time-consuming planning and/or personally rewarding gameplay can be undone because you failed to find a checkpoint. That's right; checkpoints are discovered and must be manually activated for them to be used. It means that lengthy sessions of immersion can be sporadically ruined by the lack of a forgiving checkpoint system.

Agent 47 eats these corn-flakes for breakfast



Sniper challenge... accepted

The hugely popular *Sniper Challenge* pre-order incentive mode makes a semi-return. There are certain sections that blatantly place a rifle in front of you, while others require you to hunt down a rifle for the sniping option. The real Easter Egg, though, is that IO Interactive has managed to tie in those cheeky gnomes – one of the point-multiplier challenges of *Sniper Challenge* – to the storyline in a way that makes a lot of sense, while offering some solid laughs.

No matter how satisfied we were with the outcome of a mission, we always had that feeling that we could have done something better. But, in the same breath, creativity was rewarded and rolling with the punches was encouraged. Even if your plans are foiled in a particular area, as long as you can subdue the witnesses – conveniently marked in yellow and red on the radar – say, with a silenced weapon, your mistake need not lead to your most recent checkpoint. The score might judge you for killing people – in fact, killing or subduing anyone that isn't a mission-critical target will detract points – but you can regain some or all of these points by hiding bodies or by scoring headshots. If you so desire, you can be a pacifist hitman, only dispatching your key targets and leaving everyone else unscathed. But where's the fun in that?

To be fair, that was a trick rhetorical question. It never ceased to amaze us just how much fun we were having and just how weird our near-perpetual gritted-teeth look was while playing through

Hitman: Absolution. As players that tend to prefer big bangs over silent sneaking, it was the stealthier missions that both tested our mettle and forced us to play against our preferred play style in a way that was rewarding, not frustrating. That's not to say that we didn't test out a shotgun from time to time or snap the neck of a civilian for crimes against hairstyle (read: mullets), but it was the constant presence of a risk/reward mechanic that kept us coming back for more.

If we wanted to go loud, we risked attracting the attention of an entire map of armed guards and enemy reinforcements. If we snuck through the most obvious route, we were surrounded by more guards, but were more pleased with the results when the gamble paid off. Combine this with some effective black comedy tension-relieving moments, and a spiralling dark narrative that challenges even the most pacifistic player to pull the trigger, and *Hitman: Absolution* is a much-hyped title that lives up to the hyperbole as you really do feel like Agent 47 in an immersive and beautifully realised game world. Nathan Lawrence

Final Say

PRESENTATION A
visually impressive affair with second-to-none crowd technology.

SOUND A wholly immersive element whether playing it quiet or going in guns blazing.

CONTROLS Honed and intuitive controls that nail it 99% of the time.

REPLAY VALUE
Dozens of extra hours for Trophy lovers, while Contracts mode adds impressive replay value.

Verdict

A near-perfect blending of stealth and action that will impress fans and welcomes newcomers.

9

Band-aids and bullets: is there any problem they can't fix?



The Unfinished Swan

Simple puzzling that really makes you ink

The *Unfinished Swan* is, for lack of a better acronym, a FPS – or ‘First Person Splooger’. Aside from walking, jumping and the occasional climb, pressing ‘fire’ lobes out a limitless supply of liquid gobs that splat on impact. That sounds boring, but it’s actually the base mechanic of something truly magical.

Thanks to the collectible pages of an illustrated children’s book, you’ll find out that you’re Monroe, the child inheritant of a magical paintbrush who’s at large in his late mother’s unfinished art. ‘Unfinished’ is a massive understatement, too. The first few levels start you in pitch whiteness, forcing you to flick out black ink in order to discern the environment and objects around you.

Your ears will aid the exploration, as well. *Unfinished Swan*’s lush soundscape forewarns you of deadly bubbling brooks, lurking carnivorous enemies and the location of that elusive, bastardly swan you’re chasing. The whispering winds and a suitably eccentric soundtrack will also add to your sense of utter enchantment.

Just when you think this adventure is a one-trick zebra, the monochromatic paint-balling gives way to increasingly complex art styles and paintbrush abilities. One section introduces the barest hint of shadowing into the world, along with basic platforming puzzles. This ramps up to sumi-e walls and water, plus some physics-based conundrums. Follow those swan tracks long enough, and you’ll go from being snowblind, to gawping at a labyrinth so attractive it’d make Jim Henson weep with joy, or David Bowie puncture his leotard.

Your black ink is regularly swapped for water whose impermanence is balanced by its ability to attract tendrils of climbable vines. That green thumb joy gives way to fear when you’re thrown into a night time chapter filled with stygian blackness and red-eyed spider-death. At first you’re given nothing but useless black ink, the starry sky and distant lamplight trees for direction. Your situation improves when you find kickable glow balls that offer you a way forward and a small nimbus of safety.



These are but a few of the paintbrush powers and enchanting situations that await you. To reveal more would deprive you of the thrill of discovery. We will however spoil the fact that a conservative run will take two hours. But factor in the quality, asking price, and additional collectible challenges, and *Unfinished Swan* is well worth your time.

Yeah, the puzzles are moderately difficult, and (we think) the levels are linear, but there’s simply no denying childlike wonder *Unfinished Swan* engenders, nor the indelible mark it leaves upon your heart.  Adam Mathew

Info

FORMAT: PSN
GENRE: PUZZLE
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: GIANT SPARROW
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$19.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
NON-SYDNEY BASED SWANS?



Final Say

PRESENTATION An argument winner for the “what’s less is more” debate. Mesmerising.

SOUND Few games can match the atmosphere that gets delivered here.

CONTROLS Simple first person controls that never put a foot wrong.

REPLAYABILITY A couple of balloons to collect, not much more than that.

Verdict
Utterly enchanting, but painfully short. Great for the young, and the young at heart.

7

“I see the flesh of fallen angels and lizards in helicopters.” [How to fail a Rorschach test](#)



Street Fighter X Tekken

Buy it, or go home and be a family man

After its March PS3 release, *Street Fighter x Tekken* (*SFxT*) for Vita is incredibly late to the party. But while Capcom's excuse that this is more than a mere port is a little underweight, *SFxT* is without doubt the new king of biff on the handheld.

All the nuggets of praise we gave to the PS3 version still shine brightly for the Vita release; it moves like a svelte moonwalking master but manages to keep compromises to a minimum.

There are only two areas in which the Vita version is technically not comparable to its PS3 counterpart; firstly the load times between fights average around 15 seconds, and secondly character models have fewer polygons and less detailed textures. With the game burning away in front of you though, such issues are moot.

Crafting a complex fighter around the Vita interface was always going to be a quest. Fortunately Capcom's eggheads have mitigated the situation by creating four touch screen buttons on the Vita's

front and two on the rear touch pad. The size and position of the front screen buttons can be altered to ensure the full arsenal of Cross Arts, Tag Combos and other complex inputs are accessible in the heat of a throwdown.

That brings us to the extra "content". Drum roll – the hyper controversial 12-character DLC is unlocked and available from the get-go and brings the total roster to a massive 55 characters. PS3 owners who pickup a brand new copy of the game on Vita also score the DLC for their PS3 version if they haven't unlocked it already.

The other Vita-specific content feels like a collection of bits and pieces. Burst Kumite mode allows players to take on the CPU in an infinite number of battles, and there's a dinky AR feature that allows players to position game characters in the real world using the Vita's camera.

While these feel like mild pleasantries, it's impossible not to be impressed by the love given to the game's online functionality. Players can fight over the PSN and opt to go up against PS3 or Vita rivals, zealots will love the Replay Analyser, and there's even the ability to take on CPU fighters that mimic the character and gem configuration of previous online opponents!

SFxT for Vita is a maddeningly brilliant obsession that will burn holes in your mitts. If you're looking for a fighter to permanently fuse to your hip, or want to save yourself having to spend \$30 just to unlock the DLC of your PS3 copy, punch a hole in your piggy bank and go pick this up. You won't regret it.  **James Ellis**

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA
GENRE: FIGHTING
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: AIE
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1 - 4
RRP: \$59.95

PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:
ULTIMATE MARVEL VS.
CAPCOM 3



Ryu and Ken attempt to blast Jack-X's B.O.

Final Say

PRESENTATION Arcade charm meets with the Vita's sexy hardware to produce the fighting pin-up for the system.

SOUND Cool voice acting but with tatty arcade pop. Fortunately the game supports playing your own tunes underneath.

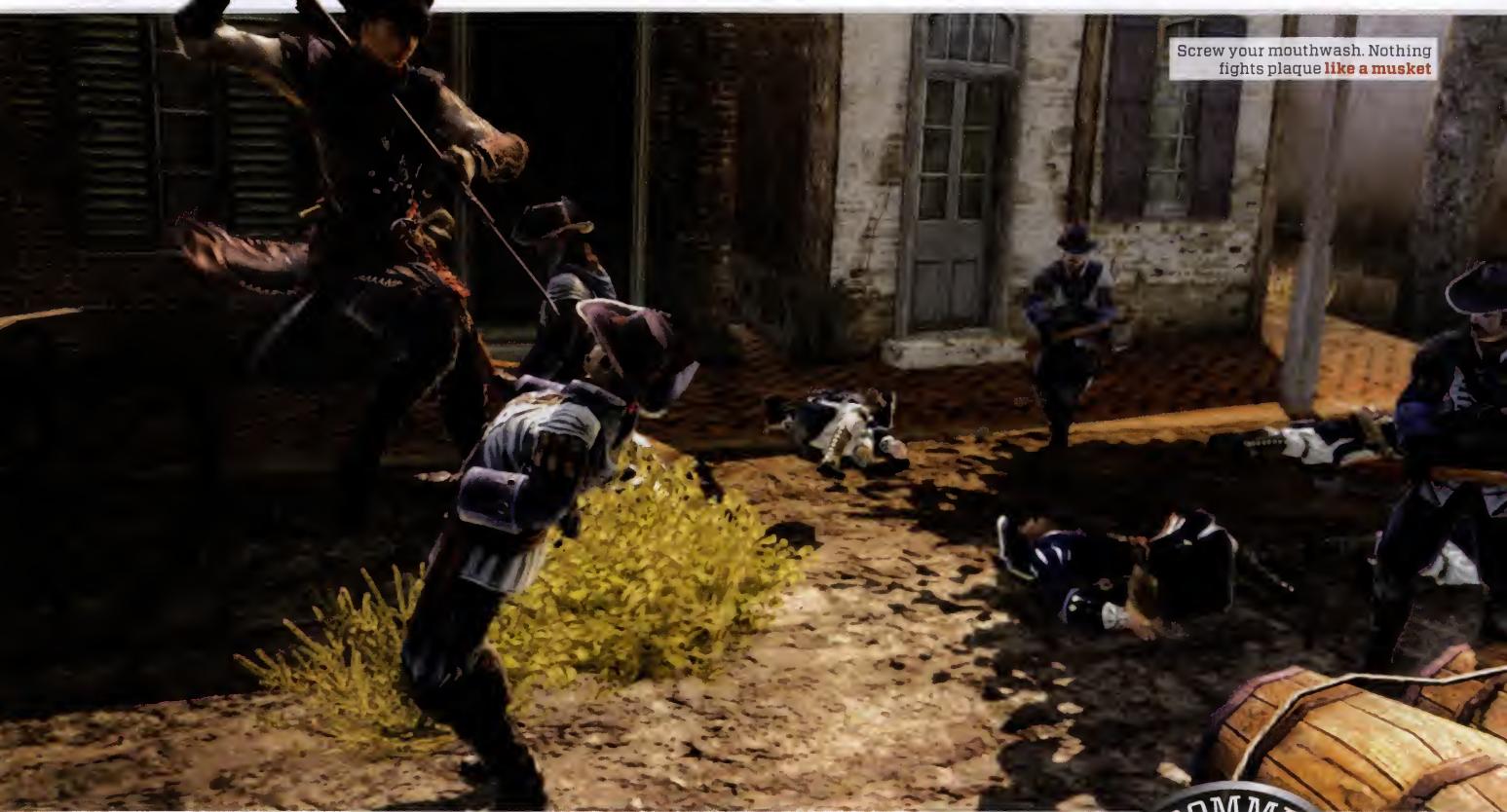
CONTROLS Playing on the Vita initially feels a little cramped compared to a PS3 controller or joystick, but the touch screen and rear pad buttons help considerably.

REPLAY VALUE Put it on your Vita and leave it there. A robust online mode and Cross Play support with PS3 means this game has years of life in it.

Verdict

Street Fighter x Tekken crosses to the Vita without a scratch!

9



Screw your mouthwash. Nothing fights plaque like a musket

Assassin's Creed III Liberation

For whom the belle tolls



Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT SOFIA
PLAYERS: 1 - 8
RRP: \$69.95

► PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:
 DEATH, DESTRUCTION,
 DRESS-UPS

In the spirit of Assassin tradition, let's cut to the heart of things. Your hopes are founded, disillusioned Vita owner. *Assassin's Creed III Liberation* is both a worthy handheld companion to Connor's adventure, and it's the killer app PS Vita has been so desperately needing.

Thanks to the scalability of Ubisoft's Anvil Next engine, *Liberation* feels like it's been cut from the same hoodie cloth as its PS3 big brother. The all new, femme fatale protagonist Aveline, ninjas through New Orleans

and its forested Bayou outlands using the same silky traversal system. Likewise, you get the rhythmic new 'Arkham City' combat system – though Aveline's tools offer new strategic avenues.

Just as Connor's Mohawk heritage shaped his arsenal toward tomahawks and bows, Aveline's methods are a product of her tumultuous upbringing. At the height of her powers you'll slaughter slave masters with a sugarcane machete, whip-grab rival smugglers and reel them in for an uppercut, use a blowpipe to make others believe in your deadly voodoo curse, or you may just use your décolletage to charm a rich dandy into a secluded area, only to shoot him in the face with a parasol gun.

That's an eclectic modus operandi, and it's made possible by a fascinating twist to the established AC formula. Aveline, as the mixed heritage result of a slave and an aristocrat, lives three lives and can be made to walk between worlds whenever you please. Providing you've unlocked one of the many Dressing Chambers in the city, you may alter your persona to that of an Assassin, Lady, or lowly Slave. Each

disguise comes with its own positives and negatives, and each has its own persistent notoriety level that is ever-present in your HUD.

The Assassin guise, with its bitchin' pirate tri-hat, is easily the best. You can never lower your notoriety level to zilch, but Aveline is at her peak performance with full access to her whip, flintlock-pistol and better armour. Little of Connor's assassin skillset has been lost in this handheld translation. It does, however, have to be said that there have been some concessions in the framerate, on-screen enemy count, and enemy AI departments. The first two are perfectly acceptable – the latter concerns poor spatial awareness during fights, and is only slightly annoying.

Much like real life, swapping your blade for a bustle and becoming a lady isn't especially fun. Not only is your movement speed reduced to a dainty jog, but your climbing skills are severely limited, and muggers hassle you. Also, a lady would never dream of leaping into a haystack to lay low from The Man – decorum demands one's notoriety be lowered by assassinating witnesses with your



Aveline may not stretch her sea-legs, but she's landlubbin' life



hidden blade. On the plus side, a lady can charm or bribe guards away from their posts, and notoriety gains the slowest with this guise. Everybody loves a pretty face, right up until it head-butts them off a balcony.

At the opposite end of the social spectrum is the slave. Apparently, when you're a pariah in a French colony you need only fart sideways at a guard to earn yourself the death penalty, and without assassin armour you'll die quickly. Though it's difficult – sometimes impossible – to lower your notoriety as the snail-paced lady, the slave has the speed required to escape, evade and tear down wanted posters. Other benefits include the ability to blend in with other slaves and incite diversionary riots.

The reason for Aveline's game of 'dress ups' are many. Ultimately, you're on the trail of a Templar slave trader known only as The Company Man, but that well-spun and twisting narrative is interwoven with a number of side-plots. Your attention is often drawn back to the childhood disappearance of Aveline's mother, a destabilising relationship with your voodoo Brotherhood master, and hassles arising from your well-to-do family's trading company.

The latter concern is used as an excuse to shoehorn in a port management mini-game that's not unlike the risk-reward trading in *ACIII*. It's fun, if a little unintuitive, and we would have swapped it for a brotherhood mechanic, any day of the week.

Speaking of which, there are quite a few things that didn't make the jump from *ACIII*, but should have. You can hunt the odd alligator, but nothing else. There are no ride-able horses, and the fast travel

"Everybody loves a pretty face, right up until it **head-butts them off a balcony**"

isn't nearly as helpful. Worst of all, those orgasmic *ACIII* naval missions on the high-seas got right-sized down to a canoe ride up a swamp. Yah-fricken-hoo.

But we digress, those criticisms are reserved for the spoiled person who's momentarily forgotten they're playing a handheld. That happens a lot in *Liberation*. This is easily the sexiest looking, smoothest running and features packed open-world game on a portable.

Yes, *Liberation* may not boast as many side-diversions as *ACIII*, but more than enough DNA from that GOTY contender has made the leap. PS Vita technical limitations are offset by the fact that we think Aveline's tale is slightly superior to the PS3 adventure. That being the case, *Assassin's Creed III: Liberation* is must-play material, no matter which way you dress it. **Adam Mathew**

Crossing over and multiplayer

Liberation includes a multiplayer mode "specifically tailored to the Vita experience". But, truth be told, due to time constraints and our Vita debug's unwillingness to get online (and stay there), we didn't get much of a chance to see it. By the time you've read this we'll have voiced our opinions of it on our Facebook page, so go take a look.

We did get to appreciate the cross functionality where goods can be swapped between *ACIII* and *Liberation*. Connor always makes a cameo in the later stages of *Liberation*, but if you link the two titles you can score his tomahawk for Aveline.

Final Say

PRESENTATION More reliable than *ACIII*, in a technical sense. A true showcase for PS Vita.

SOUND Decent voice acting across the board. Some weapon sounds are a bit tinny.

CONTROLS Amazing parkour. Countering against spatially unaware enemies can irritate. A small amount of Vita control gimmickry.

REPLAY VALUE After a conservative 9 hour campaign run, there's multiplayer and side-quests aplenty.

Verdict

This razor sharp spin-off makes quite a mark in the AC canon. Own a Vita and you own this.

9



Don't get your crayons out for sunset, God. I got this. *Epic explosion*

Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz

B-A-N-A-N-A-S.



Pro tip: You should go now

Info

INFO

FORMAT: PS VITA
GENRE: PLATFORMER
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
DEVELOPER: AMUSEMENT VISION
PLAYERS: 1-4
RRP: \$69.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
MARBLES, MADNESS

The original *Monkey Ball*, which appeared first in arcades and then on the GameCube with a 'Super' plastered at the front of its name, was dedicated to the joys of stick controls.

The series' recent predilection for motion controls makes sense to some degree, since you play by tilting the entire level rather than rolling the trapped monkey, but *Monkey Ball* has long since lost its sense of precision.

Banana Blitz allows for tilt controls, but

it's the first *Monkey Ball* in a long time that doesn't make concessions for them; once you hit the 'Advanced' course, the idea of tilting your way through the perilous levels the developers have cooked up is absurd.

Gone are the wide beams and lovely safety fences around the edges of levels that we'd grown used to. They're replaced with a brand of fiendishness that'll have you tearing your hair out, punching objects and hurling your Vita across the room. Only to pick it up and have another, begrudging, go.

For *Monkey Ball* veterans, this is extremely welcome stuff, and although the return to a brutal arcade-style structure means that most players will never hope to reach the final levels, we're pleased to see the game nodding back at its classic roots.

That's not to say that *Banana Splitz* is on par with the original, though. The eight mini-games range from 'not bad' to 'pretty bad' (and *Monkey Target* is upsettingly drab now), a few level designs aren't particularly well thought out, and visually the game is on the ugly side. Still, it's the best *Monkey Ball* in years. **James O'Connor**

Final Say

PRESENTATION The cartoonish look of the monkeys is fine, but the backgrounds aren't what they used to be.

SOUND Perfectly functional, albeit completely forgettable.

CONTROLS Skip over the tilt controls and go straight for the analogue stick and you'll be happy.

REPLAY VALUE The harder levels will keep you coming back for a long time, even if the multiplayer mini-games won't.

Verdict

A surprising return to form that gets the fundamentals right, for the most part.

7

Damage Inc. Pacific Squadron WWII

Mayday, maydaaaaay...

Info

FORMAT:

PS3

GENRE:

FLIGHT

RELEASE:

NOW

DISTRIBUTOR:

TBA

DEVELOPER:

MAD CATZ

PLAYERS:

1-8

RRP:

\$49.99US

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
CRASHING, BURNING

For many US naval aviators, fighting the Imperial Japanese was their finest hour. Reliving their exploits in *Damage Inc. Pacific WWII* was easily our worst eleven.

Forget for a second that hardcore flight-sims are arguably the sole domain of the PC – and that accessories manufacturer-cum-developer Mad Catz originally wanted to call this *War Wings: Hell Catz* – that's not what this is about. We don't like *Damage Inc.* because it's plain ol' shoddy.

Midst the déjà vu missions of 'fly here, kill this', Mad Catz has wedged in

a poorly voiced, go nowhere plot that irritates way more than it entertains. The main character, Bobby, has all the emotional range of a lobotomised outpatient. He reacts to the unfolding horror of war like somebody flicking through paint samples might when discovering what puce is. The poorly-produced cutscenes he features in frequently glitch out, and will cause your own enthusiasm to nosedive as well.

But we digress, about as many people go into a flight-sim expecting a ripping yarn as filmgoers did *Pearl Harbour* expecting Ben Affleck not to suck. What the avid propeller-head wants is realism, depth and tactics – all of which *Damage Inc.* does not deliver. There's no dynamic damage, your cockpit gauges may as well be crayoned on, and while the controls are responsive, this game cares not for your Earth-air physics.

If you wish to persist, up to four players can take on *Damage Inc.* via multiplayer co-op. It works, in the barest technical sense, but you'd have more luck recruiting and retaining players for a game of naked handball. WWII flight sims have been done so much better elsewhere. This is one ride that ought to be chock-blocked at all costs. **Adam Mathew**



Avoid this game like you would a kamikaze fighter

Final Say

PRESENTATION Like a dog's breakfast brought up for an encore. The PS2 is back!

SOUND The soundscape is so tacky it's like pouring varnish in your ears.

CONTROLS Responsive enough, but expect to do the exact same thing to 80 planes in 30 minutes.

REPLAY VALUE Multiplayer options that you'd have to pay people to join you in.

Verdict

My First Flight Sim, with uninspiring sound and visuals.

3

Rugby League Live 2

Simply not the best

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SPORTS
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: HES
DEVELOPER: BIG ANT STUDIOS
PLAYERS: 1-8
RRP: \$99.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
 TWITCH GAMEPLAY,
 LITERALLY

Insider info: the original *Rugby League Live* had a different name in the early stages of its development – *Rugby League Next Gen*. Thank God that never happened, because this follow-up would've needed to be called 'Next-Next Gen'. Both monikers would have been the most fraudulent advertising since *The NeverEnding Story*.

This homegrown, digital recreation of rugby league is still nowhere near as polished as an EA Sports production – zero surprises there. Even still, it has to be said that the visuals in this sequel have made a leap beyond the Lilliputian bar set by *RLL*. The animations, particularly

during tackles and scrums, look more fluid – though if movement in real-life may be likened unto water, *RLL2*'s locomotion is still a melted thick-shake.

There's more strategic depth this time, which is great for veterans looking for variety, but it makes *RLL2* noticeably less pick-up-and-play than the Sidhe games. In addition to being able to hold down tackled players, there are multiple tackle options including arm-pins (easier to dodge, shuts down offloads), low shots (safer, but allows offloads) and desperate dives. We could not, for the life of us, find the button combination for Hopoate signature tackles. DLC, perhaps.

Speaking of shoring up the cracks of the past, this sequel has the player creation and proper league system that *RLL* lacked. That said, some legacy issues resurface. The default end-to-end camera is still a massive pain when it switches for an intercept. Players, most notably the FRF and 2RF, love to drift out of position and hang out on the wings. Also, while expanded controls are welcomed, the game mishandles them – you'll punch walls when any tackle before an intercept gets interpreted as a grubber kick after you gain possession.

► Clint McCreadie



"Cross swords with this" *ripping sound*

Final Say

PRESENTATION Better, not amazing. Decent face likenesses, but one-size-fits-all body modeling.

SOUND Vossey is wheeled out again (with some added phrases). Gus Gould needs more lines, gets annoying.

CONTROLS Added tactics and a decent control rethink. Cheap fend tactics and interception oddities persist.

REPLAY VALUE There's crude online multiplayer but *RLL2* is better experienced locally.

Verdict

Still wobbly, but nowhere near as much.
 Competent enough for fans.

6

Retro City Rampage

Go for a mega drive, do what nintendidn't

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: TBA
DEVELOPER: MAD CATZ
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: TBC

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
 GOING BACK TO THE FUTURE

It's not often we paraphrase press releases, but *Retro City Rampage*'s sets the piss-take tone of this perfectly.

"You are The Player. Your open-world crime spree is suddenly ambushed by 'evil' Good Guys who'll stop at nothing to protect the citizens of Thetropolis from your rampage of doom. Are YOU rad enough to defeat the Evil Good Guys?"

RCR looks like an 8-bit shit sandwich, and on purpose. Gameplay-wise it's a fiendishly fun send-up of the original *GTA* and a large array of NES games, certainly too many to list here. As you steal vehicles, and outrun the

law in top-down view, you can expect to see a tonne of tongue-in-cheek tropes. Jumping on pedestrians, or blasting them with guns, causes them to vomit up coins and power-ups.

The controls are tight and very easy to grasp; the real challenge comes from the truly psychotic cops tailing you. When you're not getting your *GTA* on in the overworld, *RCR*'s 80 odd missions will offer you a lot of gameplay variety. You might find yourself side-scroll platforming, or cycling through an isometric-view neighbourhood, delivering porno mags.

Beyond the addictive action, where *RCR* really shines is with its irreverent comedy and fan-service references. Expect to snort milk out of your nose when The Player randomly codes a Solid Snake wannabe who responds in broken Engrish. Even if you weren't gaming back then you'll get a grin when you're given a DeLorean and asked to run over 88 people to fill your Flax Combobulator. And it's hard not to recommend any game where a sweet looking black van empties out a Mr. T boss. If that doesn't do it for you, we pity the fool.

► Adam Mathew



Not pictured: police restraint



Final Say

PRESENTATION Recreates the crudeness of yesteryear perfectly. Not a showcase title for your new TV.

SOUND Bleeps and bloopers that are sweet music to the ear. Newbies may hate it though.

CONTROLS Like the games of yore: a cinch to pickup, yet difficult to fully master.

REPLAY VALUE Rampage missions and mini-games ahoy. Online leaderboards and cross-play too.

Verdict

If it's your era - amazing game. May fly right over the head of newer gamers, though.

8

"We shan't rest until this is solved. Fancy a cuppa?"

The Testament of Sherlock Holmes

'Sup, Holmes?

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ADVENTURE
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: QVS
DEVELOPER: FROGWARS
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$69.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
 BEING MADE TO FEEL STUPID,
 THEN SMART-LIKE

There's nothing like a stint as the world's greatest detective to realise how stupid one is. But perhaps 'stupid' isn't the best word we could've thunk what to put...back there. 'Institutionalised' or 'pampered', are more apt descriptors, as *The Testament of Sherlock Holmes* is a modern take on ye olde point-and-click adventure games. When it forces you to rely purely on your wits – not a bunch of hand-holding mechanics designed to shuffle our imbecilic arses onward – it becomes an eye-opening and addictive experience.

To those of you hoping for equal parts snoopin' and shootin', like some sort of Victorian-era *L.A. Noire* – get set for disappointment. Thanks to rookie developer Frogwares, you'll be getting all the fun of walking through old-timey environments, being quiet, reading notebooks and paying attention – *Testament* has it all!



Note to self: tripping balls on acid – not so rad with sulphuric

We're actually taking the piss. Despite the languid pace, it's hard to put down the controller once this riveting conspiracy to paint Sherls as a mass murderer begins. And, though it may sound morbid to say it, you'll always be hanging out to see the next hideously mutilated corpse and figure out how, and why, they had to be reconfigured in such a fashion. To do that you'll need to scour richly detailed crime scenes to gather facts, then link those into deductions to open up new parts of the investigation. Sometimes these sections are bookended by puzzles; which is typically an improbably elaborate lock on a safe.

Fortunately, one needn't sit there scratching their ape-like forehead over these. A hint system allows objects of interest to be highlighted, and dedicated puzzles – not environmental ones – can be skipped. But even with that in place you should be prepared to find an online FAQ when you don't 're-try' something after triggering a seemingly unconnected cutscene, or some such rort.

Work through that small smattering of unfair moments, and we reckon you'll find that being Sherlock Holmes is a welcome change of pace. He's no Downey Jr., but this videogame version is still an amoral prick who's totally down with poisoning plebs, breaking and entering, prodding corpses, and threatening some of the ugliest children ever rendered digitally. Aside from explosions, QTEs and loot, what more could you want from a game?

► **Adam Mathew**



"Best extinguish your pipe, sair. Clopper got into the missus' cabbages"



"Halt, or I'll aim well away from your person"

Final Say

PRESNTATION Stilted, but serviceable virtual performances that make you miss MotionScan.

SOUND Holmes and Watson offer passable performances. Everybody else is average to 'ugh'.

CONTROLS It's a first-person clicker. It'd be hard to screw that up.

REPLAY VALUE Not much after the credit roll. So use that Online FAQ sparingly.

Verdict

A satisfying, modern update of point 'n' click adventures.

7

This is our favourite special move.
It's called giant kick to the face

WWE'13

How far can nostalgia get you?

There are times when we feel like we're taking crazy pills here at the OPS Towers, for all the radically different takes on titles we've seen from our industry peers. When *WWE'12* was released we weren't entirely sure we were playing the same game considering the reviews it received.

How could the shoddy control scheme be discounted in favour of the soap opera styled storylines? Seriously, *Heavy Rain* offered more satisfying gameplay. After taking it all with a grain of salt in our preview sessions we're sad to say not much has changed on the mechanics front. *WWE'13* still leaves a lot to be desired.

The major selling point of *WWE'13* is the story driven Attitude Era. Focusing on the ratings battle between the WWE and WCW was a fantastic idea as it featured some of the most memorable rivalries in WWE history. You'll play as eight superstars including legends the likes of Triple H, Kane, The Undertaker, Mankind, The People's Champ 'The Rock' and Stone Cold Steve Austin to name a few.

Working through each career you'll have specific objectives to complete with a wealth of information and backstory at your disposal. You'll even unlock bonuses

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SPORTS

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: AIE

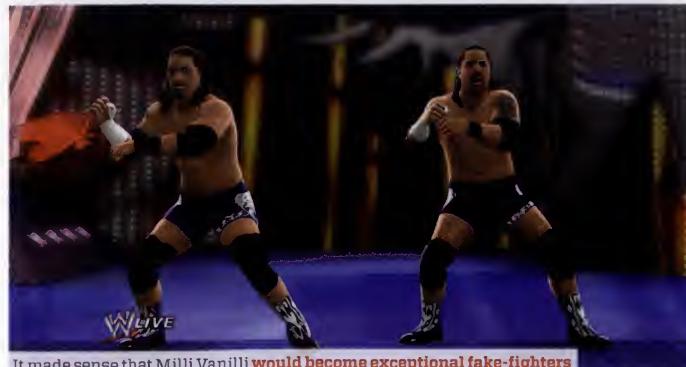
DEVELOPER: YUKE'S FUTURE

MEDIA CREATIONS

PLAYERS: 1 - 2

RRP: \$89.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
WWE ALL-STARS



It made sense that Milli Vanilli would become exceptional fake-fighters



Goldust's signature move, *Biting Helicopter Spin* left marks

for faithfully recreating the same conditions as the real-life matches. The problem is it's pretty much a story driven affair without the subtle controls to mirror the content.

In some matches it almost feels like the AI is taking the piss, effortlessly stringing together combinations and reversals, when it is nowhere near as easy to do this yourself. There's a lot of assumed knowledge and familiarity with the franchise, which can be disconcerting to newcomers. Positioning is key for finishers and signature moves and can get frustrating when your opponent is wailing on you almost effortlessly.

The reversal windows are way too short and stacking up the inconsistencies with the less than user-friendly controls severely detracts from the compelling history lesson the Attitude Era is attempting to deliver. The same issues follow through each mode almost negating the incredibly detailed roster of over 80 wrestlers across countless event and match combinations.

Yuke's has nailed the entertainment component for the WWE franchise. However, mimicking its real life counterpart the actual wrestling elements often miss the mark and could really use a reality check. Yuke's needs to inject the same healthy dose of the complexity it brings to its take on the UFC. This just feels entirely too fake and rehearsed for our liking.

— Dave Kozicki

Final Say

PRESENTATION Solid embodiment of each wrestler's look and motion with live action intros adding a nice touch to matches.

SOUND Exceptional attention to detail with live crowd sounds and authentic commentary recreated.

CONTROLS Still clunky and it doesn't feel all that user friendly. Reversal windows are too short.

REPLAY VALUE There's plenty on offer and a robust online component, but will the controls stop your fun?

Verdict

It's hard to fault the Attitude Era's content but the controls make it a tough ask to persevere through.

6

Mugen Souls

One gamer's journey to peon the world

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: JRPG

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: COMPILE HEART

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$59.95

► PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:

HYPERSDIMENSION NEPTUNIA

Despite a largely female cast *Mugen Souls* has a totally different target market in mind; men obsessed with the dirtier, and questionably legal, aspects of Japanese culture.

You play as Lady Chou Chou, a self proclaimed god who intends to make everything in the seven worlds her peons (slaves). Each world adds more characters to your party and rewards you with cutscenes of half naked girls in spa baths. Sexual references like this litter the game and provide a sense of humour

to an otherwise forgetful storyline. Your default armour is old panties, or 'Panties whose colour has slowly turned into a mouldy yellow.' Dialogue treads on ground normally considered taboo; 'Oh man, this guy's pissed me off! I'm gonna peon his ass right now.' Chapter titles are just as face-palm worthy, with such gems as: 'Chapter 5: Overwhelming Size! In the biting cold, the group encounters something massive! (It's boobs.)' Wow.

There are a heap of attack options available, many which trigger out-of-this-world cut-scenes similar to *Asura's Wrath*. An emotion gauge allows you to capture enemies and turn them into usable items by correctly picking three emotions/actions that will charm them.

While pretty during attack sequences, generally *Mugen Souls* is graphically unimpressive. Environments in Fire World consist of motionless lava textures, rocks jutting out of the ground and the occasional purple cactus – riveting stuff. Even with bland worlds like this the framerate can suffer quite substantially.

Compile Heart's latest outing is at times funny, but its dated graphics engine and turn based combat system fails to leave any lasting impact. Fairly uninspired.

• Martin Gladstone



Final Say

PRESENTATION

Colourful and flashy like an epilepsy-inducing cartoon show, the art style is sweeter than sweet despite the constant sexual overtones.

SOUND English voice acting is whiny (the Japanese is much better) but parts of the soundtrack are catchy.

CONTROLS Standard fare for a JRPG with a terribly complicated tutorial system.

REPLAY VALUE Main quest lasts 20–25 hours. The Mugen Field provides a challenge beyond the main quest.

Verdict

Quirky but has been done better and many times before.

Wait for *Ni No Kuni* instead.

6

New Little King's Story

Elvis ain't got squat

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: MINDSCAPE

DEVELOPER: KONAMI

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$69.95

► PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:

BOSSING FOOLS AROUND,
SLIDESHOW VISUALS

Servile mushheads, who follow their leader close enough to be a growth on his butt, were made to be messed with. As their liege, you might run them full speed into walls, pressgang them into any occupation you feel like, or just enact a law that demands they wear budgie smugglers all year round.

When you're not out for your regal rofls you should probably use them to win back your country. Conscription places citizens behind you in a duckline, then @ will fire them out to kill your enemies, cut paths, or enter an employment hut to learn one

of 30 skillsets. How many of your minions you shoot at a task determines how quickly it's done, but if your pissweak king becomes threatened you must call them back to setup various defensive positions.

Expanding your borders, raping the world of its resources, pimping your city, and forcing simpletons to die protecting you becomes a pleasant, if slightly repetitive grind. Multi-platform folk will recognise NLKS as *Pikmin* mixed with *Final Fantasy Tactics*, served with a side-order of light management-sim. That's a potent recipe, but Konami undercooks it.

Mild framerate issues appear whenever you earn the right to command more than 10 minions. That problem compounds when you must organise them at the start of every in-game day with a less-than-streamlined interface. When you do finally leave the 'Chug City' limits and get into combat, it can be fiddly trying to target individual enemies.

New Little King's Story could have been a surprise hit. But, as it stands, all its charm and whimsy is marred by poor menu design and technical issues that aren't game-breaking, just a royal pain in the butt. • Clint McCreadie



Final Say

PRESENTATION

Saccharine Japanese cuteness spoiled by on/off slowdown issues.

SOUND English VO is fairly awful. Otherwise, unremarkable.

CONTROLS Functional for the most part, but not the surest targeting in the world.

REPLAY VALUE There's not much left to do after you conquer the world. Just like real-life.

Verdict

A quirky PS Vita title that got rushed out the door.

6

220 Triathlon

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Above the rim



Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SPORT
RELEASE: 2 OCTOBER
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K SPORTS
DEVELOPER: VISUAL CONCEPTS
PLAYERS: 1-4
RRP: \$89.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
NBA 2K12, JAY-Z RECORDS

Not only is Jay-Z an NBA team part-owner of the newly relocated Brooklyn Nets, he's also jumped into videogames as Executive Producer of NBA 2K13. Frankly, we're surprised it's taken this long. Surely an entrepreneur of his stature would have seen the potential returns videogames can offer long ago.

What does he actually offer NBA 2K13? Apart from the obvious dope soundtrack – which is quite eclectic and very well timed we might add – all we can see is that he was able to get Scotty Pippen included in the '92 Dream Team lineup (and Charles Barkley, if that counts).

It does look good having his name on the box though, not that the game needs it. Visual Concepts has upped the ante where it could have simply taken

a breather, especially considering the competition has taken another time out.

Instead, controls have been upgraded to include a more intuitive feel, with the right stick now used for ball control as well as shooting. The old button controls are still applicable, it just depends if you want to keep up with the times, as well as how much flare you want to add to your floor game.

MyCAREER is extremely addictive. From character creation to being drafted in NBA, playing as a rookie and improving your team grade and even getting traded to another team, if that's how you roll. All the while earning as much Virtual Currency (VC) as you can in games and challenges. You can even chat to GM's about the way things are going or boost team chemistry to help things run smoother on the court.

Pimping out your character with fresh kicks, apparel and accessories is where the VC comes in handy, but if you really want you could also use it to upgrade statistics and buy Signature Skills.

With all the previous modes returning and the addition of MyTEAM, made up of the players that you can acquire, there's something here for everyone. Albeit Blacktop does lack a bit of the flare we would have liked to see from some neighbourhood b-ball. You can even play as Justin Bieber using the Celebrity Team. Such an immersive, great looking game, we can't wait to reach the hall of fame.

► **Naren Hooson**

Final Say

PRESNTATION Blinged out and shiny. NBA players represented well and there are plenty of options to customise your character.

SOUND A rad mix of music to get you hyped up and not back down until you've won the playoffs and become a hall-of-famer! The MyCAREER character voice sounds like a lazy Ice-T though.

CONTROLS Extended options for ball control and shooting with the right stick. Button play still works extremely well and both are great with the movement and momentum of the game.

REPLAY VALUE On the couch matches and online matches offer endless playability.

Verdict

One of the best yet. Still a sports game though, which means a lot of repetition.

9

NiGHTS into Dreams HD

A game, within a dream, within a game...

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: PLATFORMER
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SEGA (SHANGHAI) SOFTWARE
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$12.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
PLATFORMING WITH A TWIST,
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

If Inception taught us anything, it's that dreams are super confusing. It also helps us conveniently segue towards NiGHTS into Dreams HD – a port of the Japan-only PS2 remake.

Set in the dream world split between Nightopia and Nightmaren, you follow the plights of two teenage children who join the renegade Nightmaren, Nights, in his quest to defeat the evil Wizeman's plot to steal dream energy and take over the world. Don't worry, we don't understand either, but that's beside the point.

After all, it's reason enough to

have you partake in not-so-traditional platforming, as you fly Nights around seven constantly adaptive 'dreams' consisting of four laps, collecting blue orbs in order to destroy a magical cage each time. Complete all four laps within the time limit provided and you'll move on to the dream's boss battle. But while the standard laps have their charm, it's the boss encounters that quickly become the game's biggest undoing.

It's not that these timed battles are bad, just poorly executed and packing direction about as helpful as a trio of blind mice. Leaving you with no indication on how to progress might have been quirky, innovative game design in 1996, but in 2012, it's an exercise in pure frustration. Replaying the initial laps over and over again, just so you can have another crack only makes matters worse.

The original Saturn version of the game is on offer too if you are so nostalgically inclined, but it still doesn't manage to escape the fundamental inadequacies NiGHTS possesses.

If you played the original this is a no-brainer. Newcomers should approach with caution. ► **Adam Guetti**



Final Say

PRESNTATION A polished remake that occasionally suffers from strange depth of field issues.

SOUND Perfectly suited tunes as you loop-de-loop.

CONTROLS Aerial navigation works well, while control of the children is incredibly clunky.

REPLAY VALUE You'll play dreams over and over again. But not because you want to.

Verdict

Not the best HD remake on the block, but one the fans are bound to get a kick out of.

6

Hell Yeah! Wrath of the Dead Rabbit

Things are getting hare-y

There are few games with the amount of variation in their visuals that *Hell Yeah* has. As you take control of Ash, the leporine Prince of Hell who's on a rampage to retrieve some incriminating photos, you'll travel through underground caves, laboratories, casinos and so on in a jetpack-cum-giant sawblade that can be rigged with rockets and machine guns. Your targets are 100 hell citizens who have seen the pics of you in the bath with your rubber ducky.

Yes, it's wacky. Everything in *Hell Yeah* has been hand drawn, coloured in with high-contrast tones, and Arkedo's version of Hell has a lot of personality. As you float and double-jump your way around the huge stages you'll find jewels and coins,

sometimes hidden in areas that need an upgrade to your jetpack-saw thing before they can be pillaged.

The century of monsters you're hunting have their own animations and design, some just idly waiting to be squished by a conveniently placed block, others beckoning to be shot by your missiles or machine gun. Each one is finished off with one of dozens QTEs, be it stealing honey from a nest, or launching a shark into space. Don't ask.

You'll have a lot of fun with *Hell Yeah*. It's wild, inventive, and although it can grate thanks to Ash's slow movements and occasionally flat, forced humour, this is a game that's undeniably fresh.

— Paul Taylor

Info
FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: PLATFORM
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: FIVE STAR GAMES
DEVELOPER: ARKEDO
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$19.95

► PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:
 EARTHWORM JIM, OUTLAND



Just Dance 4

Hot to trot

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: MUSIC
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT
PLAYERS: 1-4
RRP: \$69.95

► PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:
 ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?

We're sitting down after a couple of hours of *Just Dance 4* as we've spent. Forget UFC Trainer, Move Fitness et al; *Just Dance* has our vote for being an intense exercise-based videogame.

Not that this is the game's intention. No, the game's intention is to keep its (intended) audience of tween girls thoroughly occupied and entertained with hits such as Carly Rae Jepsen's 'Call Me Maybe', Justin Bieber featuring Nicki Minaj's 'Beauty and a Beat' blaring out the TV. Reluctant older siblings and parents



Hey I just met you, and this is crazy,
but I'm in your iPhone, so call me Siri



Dancing with the stars just got literal

can be charmed into playing (or tolerating) with They Might Be Giants, Europe, Rick Astley and Skrillex. Psy and 'Gangnam Style' will have to wait until *Just Dance 5*, or until the DLC starts to flow through.

The formula's barely changed since *Just Dance 3*. Brightly coloured representations dance on screen, you follow with a Move controller in hand. Or you can do as we did towards the end and sit on the couch and wave it as convincingly and energetically as you can. This works just enough to keep the score counter ticking up, but you'll never hit the max number of stars or nail the new and tough sub challenges that way.

These sub challenges ask you to achieve a certain rank in specific part of songs. We just want to let our aching arms recover. — Paul Taylor

Final Say

PRESENTATION Great design and syrupy animation. Busy without being chaotic, and humorous too.

SOUND The looped music becomes infuriating in tricky sections.

CONTROLS Ash needs more inertia when on-foot, and we wish the saw was zippier.

REPLAY VALUE Short lived, but fun while it lasts.

7

Verdict

A saturday morning cartoon come to life, but with lots of cel-shaded blood and guts. Challenging and fun.

Final Say

PRESENTATION Bright, friendly, accessible.

SOUND Great selection of songs, both current and classic.

CONTROLS It's possible to cheat, but practice pays off. Just ask any teenage relative.

REPLAY VALUE Ultimately depends on how much you like the tracks. We've had our fill of 'here's my number'.

8

Verdict

You'll have fun with this in spite of yourself. Catchy, colourful and challenging.

It was snow joke that Joe was having a wheelie ice time. Ugh



Joe Danger 2: The Movie

Two-wheeled wonder

The titular star of Hello Games' second platformer might be a stuntman, but you're the one who can't miss a trick to get through each stage in one piece. Joe himself is a plucky and charming character, and while he was on a motorbike the whole time in the first game, he now commands a bicycle, minecarts, snowmobiles, a jet pack and more whilst trying to score all the taxing objectives.

Clear a time challenge and you're

free to go back and attempt the others one at a time to mop up all the stars, like maintaining a trick all the way through, collecting all tokens and so on. A special medal is given to those who ace all the challenges in one go. Good luck, because *Joe Danger 2* is tough, especially in the exclusive-to-PS3 bonus levels.

Tough, but not unfair. You'll need to memorise the courses as you fling your vehicle through the air, and each of machine feels beautifully

weighted and satisfying to control. Thematically, you're making a movie with a Director shouting out cues, and it's a concept that could've been taken further as the opportunity for homages is rife.

However, you're able to try your own, to a degree, in the level editor. Whilst it's not as robust or flexible as *LittleBigPlanet*'s or *ModNation Racers*', you're still able to create your own devious diversions. Very cool. **Paul Taylor**

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: PLATFORMER
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: HELLO GAMES
DEVELOPER: HELLO GAMES
PLAYERS: 1 - 4
RRP: \$19.95

► PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKED
BURNOUT

Final Say

PRESENTATION
Bold, beautiful and uncluttered. Joe himself is charismatic.

SOUND The Director's cues are a bit rough, but otherwise the effects and music provide plenty of atmosphere.

CONTROLS Tight and superbly weighted. The jetpack is especially challenging.

REPLAY VALUE The bonus 'gaiden' levels will demand you knuckle down.

Verdict

Whether you're new to the series or loved this first, this will sit proudly on your PS3's HDD.

8



Rock Band Blitz

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** MUSIC **RELEASE:** OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** HARMONIX **DEVELOPER:** HARMONIX **PLAYERS:** 1 **RRP:** \$17.45

While *Retro/Grade* gave reason to get the guitar out, you can put it back with *Blitz*, which is a bit like Harmonix's old but (then) gold *Frequency* and *Amplitude*. The layout is familiar: you're travelling down a note highway, striking the icons that come up on screen to get as big a highscore as possible, and like *Frequency* you need to be strategic in jumping between the lanes. No multiplayer sucks.

Verdict

If you have an existing library of *Rock Band* tracks you'll dig this.

7



The Walking Dead - Episode 3

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ADVENTURE **RELEASE:** OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** TELLTALE GAMES **DEVELOPER:** TELLTALE GAMES **PLAYERS:** 1 **RRP:** US\$4.99

Telltale's adaptation is really hitting its stride here, and it all hinges on the relationships between each of the characters. Things are getting desperate after the end of *Episode 2*, with survivors dropping off and the tension bubbling underneath. There's not much 'game' to it, but that doesn't diminish how compelling this is. Only on the US PSN, however.

Verdict

Probably the best one yet, and it's becoming emotionally complex.

8



Fuel Tiracas

FORMAT: PSV **GENRE:** PUZZLE **RELEASE:** OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** FUTURLAB **DEVELOPER:** FUTURLAB **PLAYERS:** 1 **RRP:** \$0.90

From the creators of the brilliant shooter *Velocity* comes this wonderfully frantic puzzle action game. The goal is to fill and drain fuel cells, each with their own schedule, forcing you to dance your fingers around the screen, tapping on the icons to keep everything in balance. It sounds simple, but quickly ramps up with additional gauges that also need draining. Very stylish and refined.

Verdict

An excellent PlayStation Mobile title for less than a dollar. Do get.

9

internet

NEWS, DLC,
REVIEWS

► WHAT'S NEW

PSN

DEVELOPMENTS

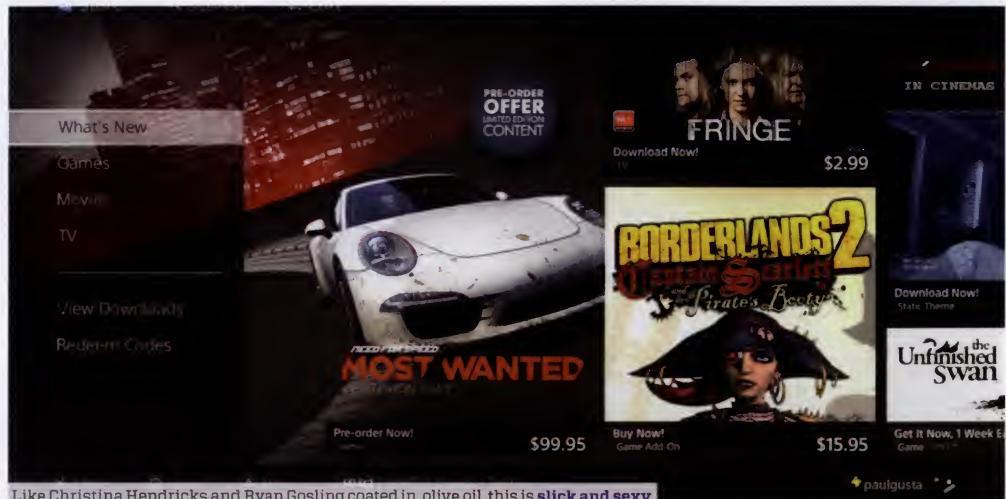
What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

So how about that new PlayStation Store, eh? Pretty swanky! Puts the old one to absolute shame, it does. Admittedly, the old store was a bit clunky in many respects, but even if it weren't, the new version would still be hella sweet.

As you can see from the screenshot to the right there, the garish blue and white colour scheme of yore has been abandoned in favour of an understated graphite aesthetic that's more in keeping with PlayStation's brand identity. PS3 is black, Vita is black, and now the PS Store is also (mostly) black. Makes sense.

The interface itself has also been radically reworked. The home screen is now divided into tiles and scrolls horizontally, with a navigation bar on the left side of the screen grouping content by platform, price, popularity, and so on. It's an intuitive setup and a marked improvement over its predecessor in just about every respect.

Search functionality has been improved as well. The virtual keyboard has been given the boot and replaced with a scrollable character ribbon that delivers updated results with each new letter entered into the searchbox. You've used Google, right? Well it's a bit like that: easy-to-use and supremely functional.



So that's the new PlayStation Store. In other news, SEGA has announced that classic roguelike *ToeJam & Earl* and its underwhelming follow-up are coming to PSN. Regarded as one of the Mega Drive's marquee titles, *TJ&E* is remarkable for its punishing difficulty, vibrant art, and absurd sense of humour. The sequel – *Panic on Funktron* – is a mediocre platformer whose only redeeming quality is its excellent soundtrack. Both should be available by the time you read this.

Finally, Konami has announced DLC plans for *New Little King's Story*, with new content packs to be released every week for a total of 23 weeks. That's a lot of content!



VIDZONE PLAYLIST SPOTLIGHT

THIS MONTH: The Killers VIP Playlist



THE SMASHING PUMPKINS - TONIGHT, TONIGHT

Take a ride on a zeppelin, go to the moon, zap some monsters, escape on a rocket.



TALKING HEADS - ROAD TO NOWHERE

David Byrne and the Heads give us the circle of life in a title that could be bleak but ends up being jaunty. Of a time.



CHAIRLIFT - EVIDENT UTENSIL

Someone went nuts with the morph and smear tools when they were stitching this together in Final Cut Pro. Rad.

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available free on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 30,000 music videos at the push of a button!



PlayStation®Network

ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS



PS3 ESSENTIALS

A whole bunch – 28 to be exact – of PS3 games have earned the title of 'Essential', and cost between \$17.95 and \$29.95. Cross reference these with the gems in our Index (p92) for your best bet.



XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN DEMO

We gave the full game a deserved 8 out of 10 last month, and this demo takes you through the tutorial and the basics of base building. Get blasting!



BIRDS OF STEEL

A truly authentic flight sim that will spin your propeller if you're looking to sink some time into mastering these weapons of the sky. This slice of history is only \$29.95, with DLC incoming.



ASSASSIN'S CREED COMPLETE PACK

Every Assassin's Creed on PS3 that's been released so far (excluding ACIII, duh), and all the DLC, for \$99.95. If you're looking for a history lesson, look here.



ROCK BAND BLITZ TRIAL

We reviewed this music matching title on p83, and anyone who's played Harmonix's Amplitude and Frequency will find this to be both fresh and familiar.

WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



PlayStation®Network

TROPHY LIVES

You love games so much you may as well be hitched to them. Here's what you did to get your beloved trophies.



Kevin Quach
Game: *Tekken Tag Tournament 2*

Trophy: All Hail, Tekken Incarnate!
Suffered sore thumbs constantly fighting, but that feeling when you land several 10 hit combos is so rewarding.



JohBro Cory Solloway-Peters
Game: *Borderlands 2*

Trophy: Cool Story, Bro
Because there's no rest for the wicked!



Joel W. Meekings
Game: *Fallout: New Vegas*

Trophy: The Courier Who Broke the Bank

Luck up to 10, blackjack becomes my new best friend.



GENRE: SHOOTER **RELEASE:** OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** 2K **DEVELOPER:** GEARBOX **PLAYERS:** 1 - 4 **RRP:** \$15.95

DLC >

Borderlands 2 - Captain Scarlett and her Pirate's Booty

You'll be hooked

You could never accuse Gearbox of not working hard. *Pirate's Booty* is a genuinely massive addition to *Borderlands 2*, a 10-hour-plus long tale of a charming pirate who will absolutely stab you in the back given the chance, unrequited love, and a Hunter S. Thompson-esque nutcase who refuses to accept that all the townsfolk are dead. Instead, he's rigged them up with megaphones, ropes and pulleys to keep the town of Oasis alive.

It's up to you to find all the missing pieces of a compass belonging to a

pacifist pirate, Blade, in order to find the treasure. Scarlet has one, as does one of her ex-shipmates who she's more than happy to have killed, and to find one of the other pieces you'll need to quell the affections of Herbert whose set up a shrine to Scarlett in his shack.

That's just the start of it. The story is the skin and bones of *Pirate's Booty*, while a choice selection of new enemies (anchor-throwing goliaths, *Tremors*-like sand worms and mind-blowing Ninja Pirates for entrees), a new vehicle and brand-new currency, Seraph crystals, that buy high-end weaponry, make up the meat and

muscle. Fattening it out even more are a tonne of sidequests.

Yes, there's a lot to do, and very little of it feels like filler. Oasis is a brand-new hub and the areas linked to it are dense. Whilst it's surprising that a new chapter to the story is out so soon after the main game landed only a month and a half ago, *Pirate's Booty* bodes well for future chapters. A must-get. **Paul Taylor**

VERDICT

Enormous and great value for the money. Sets a high benchmark for the next three chapters.



PlayStation®Network



CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 3
DEVELOPER: INFINITY WARD/
SLEDGEHAMMER GAMES
PLAYERS: 1 - 16

Take MW2 and add in some insanely addictive contracts and inventive modes in the multiplayer proper. Solid shooter fun and tonnes of DLC inbound.



DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO
DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS
PLAYERS: 2 - 8

Excellent. You'll spend most of your time playing Tag and Trailblazer, and while it sounds slim it's indescribably addictive. Believe us when we say it's worth it just for this alone.



JOURNEY
DEVELOPER: THATGAMECOMPANY
PLAYERS: 2

Alright, so it's limited but you've never played a game like this online. You'll be amazed by the level of cooperation you'll share with your fellow travellers, and it'll remind you that benevolence resides in the heart of strangers.



FIFA 13
DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS
PLAYERS: 1 - 22

Football Club is just one reason to get on board here, where real life and your digital career mesh seamlessly into one. As usual, the beautiful game is remarkably brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches. Get on it right now.



BATTLEFIELD 3
DEVELOPER: DICE
PLAYERS: 1 - 24

You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction of storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics. Team matches have little room for lone wolves, so play friendly or don't play at all.

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE

► MUST WATCH

Homeland
Season One

(MA15+)

DIRECTOR: VARIOUS **CAST:** CLAIRE DANES, DAMIEN LEWIS, MORENA BACCIARIN, DAVID HAREWOOD, NAVID NEGAHAN, MANDY PATINKIN **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

When U.S. Marine Nicholas Brody (Lewis) is recovered after years captured by Al-Qaeda as a prisoner of war he is welcomed home as a war hero. CIA counter-terrorism officer Carrie Matheson (Danes) isn't entirely convinced he hasn't been turned and thinks he's now covertly working for the enemy. Breaching protocol she investigates every aspect of his life to uncover the truth. The exceptional Damien Lewis, in his best role since playing Dick Winters in *Band of Brothers*, magnificently brings Brody's struggle to life. Yet he pales in comparison to Claire Danes. Her portrayal of the obsessed Agent Matheson struggling with her own bi-polar issues is truly fine.

Watch this if you like *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*

Verdict Outstandingly written, exceptionally acted and unbelievably tense.

8

"expertly acted and
unbelievably tense"

**Redd Inc.**

(R18+)

DIRECTOR: DANIEL KRIGE **STARRING:** NICHOLAS HOPE, KELLY PATERNITI, SAM REID, ALAN DUKES, JAMES MACKAY, HAYLEY McELHINNEY **AVAILABLE:** (RENT/OWN) \$5.99/\$24.99 1170MD (SD)

From the demented brain of Anthony O'Connor (one time writer for *OPS*) comes this snappy tale about a hostile work environment and the boss with a little time to kill. Escaped serial killer Thomas Reddmann (Hope) has forcibly detained those he believes responsible for his wrongful incarceration and wants them to prove his innocence. Anything less than superhuman diligence is met with violent, final and at times hilarious consequences. Given the modest budget, the attention to grizzly details and snappy

script are the clear winners here. Somehow the producers managed to lure special make-up effects wizard Tom Savini out of retirement to supervise, and his expert touch is apparent and one of the highlights of this homegrown feature.

Verdict A creepy local horror story with a lot of comedic bite, and blood and guts.

8

PlayStation® Store

► TOP TEN
Movies
on Demand

1 **The Dictator** Paramount Pictures

2 **The Raid** Madman Entertainment

3 **Iron Sky** Sony Pictures

4 **Men in Black 3** Sony Pictures

5 **What to Expect When You're Expecting** Roadshow Films

6 **Batman: The Dark Knight Returns Part 1** Warner Bros.

7 **Dark Shadows** Roadshow Films

8 **The Five-Year Engagement** Universal Pictures

9 **The Pirates! Band of Misfits** Sony Pictures

10 **Taken** 20th Century Fox

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The Amazing Spider-Man (M)

DIRECTOR: MARC WEBB **CAST:** ANDREW GARFIELD, EMMA STONE, RYHS IFANS, DENIS LEARY, MARTIN SHEEN, SALLY FIELD **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

After the mediocre *Spider-Man 3* doused the friendly neighbourhood wallcrawler with Mortein and left the franchise on its last legs, another re-imagining seemed ludicrous. While director Marc Webb (*500 Days of Summer*) may be odd choice to helm this blockbuster he really nails it. With a focus on a classic villain in Curt Connors (Ifans) as The Lizard and the love interest moving to Gwen Stacy (Stone) comic fans had something to cheer about. Andrew Garfield brings layered sensitivity and the right amount of awkwardness to Peter Parker and the chemistry with co-star and real life partner Emma Stone is obvious. Beautifully shot.

Watch this if you like *The Avengers*

Verdict A rock-solid reboot with a surprising amount of heart. Definitely worth renting.

8



The Dictator (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: LARRY CHARLES **STARRING:** SACHA BARON COHEN, BEN KINGSLEY, ANNA FARIS, JASON MANTZOUKAS, CHRIS PARNELL **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

After piquing interest with his Ali G and Borat ventures and a hilarious antagonist role in *Talladega Nights*, Sacha Baron Cohen's recent efforts have left a lot to be desired. *The Dictator* is his least appealing entry. Cohen plays a moronic, ruthless Arab leader, Aladeen, who finds himself out of his element and abandoned in the United States. There's little chemistry between actors and wading through the muddling plot for a 30-second speech where Aladeen compares the United States' concept of democracy to his own dictatorship is incredibly underwhelming. Even a collection of star-studded cameos can't save this turkey.

Watch this if you like *Don't Mess with the Zohan*

Verdict A five-minute skit with an 85-minute wait for the punch line isn't all that entertaining.

5



Falling Skies Season One (M)

DIRECTOR: VARIOUS **CAST:** NOAH WYLE, MOON BLOODGOOD, DREW ROY, SARAH CARTER, CONNOR JESSUP, WILL PATTON **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

Produced by Steven Spielberg this alien invasion jaunt stealthily slipped in under the radar. With 90 per cent of mankind wiped out by a vastly superior alien race, pockets of resistance begin desperately fighting back to reclaim the planet. The gritty tone (with children harnessed as slave labour) and slow reveal of the otherworldly overlords works remarkably well, allowing substantial character development and more human struggles to take centre stage. Noah Wyle's transformation as a history teacher turned unlikely hero is first rate, with his seemingly hopeless search for his missing son grounding the show.

Watch this if you like *Battlestar Galactica*

Verdict Believable character progression and Noah Wyle makes this compelling.

8



K-on!! - Season 2, Collection 1 (PG)

DIRECTOR: NAOKO YAMADA **CAST:** AKI TOYOSAKI, ASAMI SANADA, AYANA TAKETATSU, CHIKA FUJITANI, MADOKA YONEZAWA **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

The moe blobs of the light music club are back, and ready to rock their dainty, meticulously animated socks off. *K-on!!* owes its truly, truly outrageous success to delivering a sugary synthesis of pleasing colours and sounds, and details the everyday innocuous interactions between an adolescent all-girl cast. Yet these dames do not act like the hormone-fuelled, rebellious, capricious, insouciant, recalcitrant teens of the real world – their playful pining and soft-core slapstick more closely resembles the contortions of a litter of week-old kittens. This is intentional. *K-on* does not offer a simulation of the real world. Instead, it offers escape.

Watch this if you like *Beck*, *Nodame Cantabile*

Verdict Adorable teen musicians have tea parties and rock out, in that order.

7



Adventure Time - The Complete First Season (PG)

DIRECTOR: PATRICK MCNALE, LARRY LEICHLITER, COLE SANCHEZ, ADAM MUTO **CAST:** JEREMY SHADA, JOHN DIMAGGIO, HYNDEN WALCH, NIKI YANG, OLIVIA OLSON **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

Welcome to the land of Ooo, where D&D logic rules a post-apocalyptic world of dungeons, goblins, and freakish princesses forever in need of rescuing. Key episodes from this long-awaited series box set include the one where George Takei plays a tiny heart-shaped psychopath, the one where Finn & Jake revive the frozen, brain-damaged businessman zombies, and the one where the Duke of Nuts is forced to deal with his crippling addiction to pudding. Incredibly subversive and delightful.

Watch this if you like *Ren & Stimpy*

Verdict CN finally wised up and started minting this comedy gold in series-sized ingots. Do want.

8



Oreimo - Season 1 Collection (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: HIROYUKI KANBE **CAST:** AYANA TAKETATSU, YUICHI NAKAMURA, AKENO WATANABE, FUMIHIKO TACHIKI **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

A hapless teen assists his maladjusted younger sister to network amongst the eccentric lady-nerds of Tokyo. On the surface, *Oreimo* appears to be another in a long line of mildly titillating, moderately amusing, and pleasantly diverting high school farces. Yet there is a sense of humanity beneath the fan-service surface, and, improbably, the barest hint of a moral message: that life only reaches its full potential when you leave the house. There is no English-language audio for this series, but the Japanese voice talent have more than enough moe murmuring and Tsundere taunts to go around. Very amusing.

Watch this if you like *Toradora*

Verdict A heart-warming message about friendship, with dodgy innuendo.

7

MUST SEE

Seven Psychopaths (CTC)

DIRECTOR: MARTIN MCDONAGH **STARRING:** COLIN FARRELL, WOODY HARRELSON, SAM ROCKWELL, CHRISTOPHER WALKEN **IN CINEMAS:** NOVEMBER 8

Playwright-turned-film-director Martin McDonagh's second effort, *Seven Psychopaths*, takes everything that was great about *In Bruges* and amplifies it.

Marty (Farrell) is a screenwriter who's overdue on delivering his latest script which he only has the title for: 'Seven Psychopaths'. His kooky best friend Billy is expertly played by Sam Rockwell, in one of his best performances to date.

Billy, along with his friend Hans (brilliantly portrayed by Christopher Walken), make a living by kidnapping dogs from their rich owners and returning them for a reward. In their spare time they try to inspire Marty with stories, characters and even a 'calling all psychopaths' magazine advertisement. When the kidnappers accidentally take the Shih Tzu of psychotic gangster Charlie (Harrelson), the dog shit really hits the fan as Billy, Hans and Marty are pursued by ruthless gangsters.

The plot of *Seven Psychopaths* is utterly insane. There are some slower sections that feel out of the place but, across the board, *Seven Psychopaths* is entertaining from start to finish.

Watch this if you like *In Bruges*



"Ey, I got short-term memory loss, **foggetaboutit**"



Killing Them Softly (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: ANDREW DOMINIK **STARRING:** BRAD PITT, RAY LIOTTA, RICHARD JENKINS, JAMES GANDOLFINI **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

Brad Pitt stars as Jackie Cogan, a calm and collected hitman who's called in to investigate and provide street justice on the perpetrators of a heist on a mob-sanctioned poker game. The poker game was run by Markie Trattman (Liotta) who made the mistake of bragging about knocking over his own poker game several years before. Unfortunately for Markie, this makes him the prime suspect in this latest heist, as the real perps – Frankie (Scoot McNairy) and Russell (Australia's Ben Mendelsohn) – believe they've gotten away scot-free.

To help with his investigation, Cogan enlists the help of old-school out-of-town hitman Mickey (Gandolfini) in the hopes of attending to matters quickly and quietly. Unfortunately for Cogan and everyone else

involved, not much goes to plan.

Killing Them Softly is Kiwi filmmaker Andrew Dominik's third film after *Chopper* and *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*, and strikes a fascinating balance between the humour and brutality of the former and the slow pace of the latter. Ultimately, how well this point resonates with you will determine your overall enjoyment of *Killing Them Softly*.

There are fantastic performances across the board, some breathtaking cinematography and brilliant scenes throughout. The challenge, though, is the methodical speed at which the plot builds, as Dominik clearly has no qualms taking his time getting to the point over its relatively brisk 97 minute run-time.



Lawless (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: JOHN HILLCOAT **STARRING:** SHIA LABEOUF, TOM HARDY, GUY PEARCE, GARY OLDMAN, JESSICA CHASTAIN **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

Ln paper, *Lawless* is a fantastic offering. An ensemble cast joins up with Aussie writer/director duo Nick Cave and John Hillcoat in their first film together since 2005's *The Proposition*.

Shia LaBeouf puts in an engaging performance as Jack Bondurant: a young and ambitious man who bootlegs with his two older brothers in prohibition-era Virginia. When Special Deputy Charlie Rakes (Pearce) rolls into town and threatens the brothers, both sides enlist dirty tactics to protect their respective livelihoods. Forrest Bondurant (Hardy) stands as the defiant patriarch of the family, while ambitious Jack strikes a deal with Chicagoan gangster Floyd Banner (Oldman) that makes the Bondurants rich. The more money they make, though, the more Rakes squeeze the town to shut down the Bondurant's moonshine operation.

Despite fantastic performances across the board, it's the confused storyline that ultimately disappoints. The narrative bounces between various subplots; often without a clear sense of direction. If you want to see this idea done right, watch *Boardwalk Empire*.

LittleBigPlanet.com



PlayStation
Network

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SPECIAL EDITION BUNDLE OUT NOW



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experience may
change online**

The logo for PS VITA, featuring the letters 'PS' in a stylized font followed by 'VITA' in a bold, blocky font, all in white against a dark blue background. Below it, the words 'PlayStation' and 'Vita' are stacked in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

SONY
make.believe

Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

THIS MONTH

Need for Speed Most Wanted
Genre: Racing Distributor: EA
Date: Nov 1



WWE '13
Genre: Sports Distributor: THQ
Date: Nov 1

LittleBigPlanet Karting
Genre: Racing Distributor: Sony
Date: Nov 7

► PRE-ORDER PlayStation All-Stars

Battle Royale
Genre: Action Distributor: Sony
Date: Nov 22



Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two
Genre: Platformer Distributor: Surprise Attack Date: Nov 13

Far Cry 3
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: Nov 29

Sports Champions 2
Genre: Sports Distributor: Sony
Date: Nov 30



► PRE-ORDER **Call of Duty: Black Ops II**
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Activision Date: Nov 13

JAN 2013



DmC: Devil May Cry
Genre: Action Distributor: THQ
Date: Jan 15

Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2
Genre: Shooter Distributor: QVS
Date: Jan 18

Ni no Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch
Genre: RPG Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: Jan 25

F1 Race Stars
Genre: Racing Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: Nov 13

Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed
Genre: Racing Distributor: Five Star Games Date: Nov 16

► PRE-ORDER **Hitman: Absolution**
Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: Nov 20

► PRE-ORDER BONUS

PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale

Go head to head with your favourite PlayStation characters on PS3 and PS Vita. Join Kratos, PaRappa the Rapper, Nathan Drake, Fat Princess and many more, each with their own unique moves. Compete at home, online or via cross play against PS Vita players.

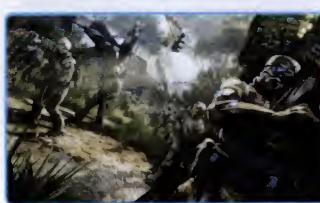


Pre-order Bonus includes:

- Exclusive set of costumes for each player

JB Hi-Fi \$79 (PS3), \$49 (PS Vita) Estimated dispatch date: 22/11/12

FEB 2013



BioShock Infinite
Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K Games Date: Feb 26

Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time
Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony Date: Feb 28

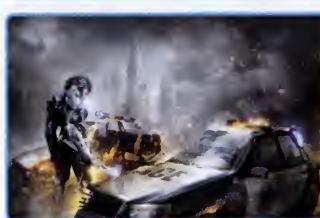
MARCH 2013

South Park: The Stick of Truth
Genre: RPG Distributor: THQ Date: Mar 5



Tomb Raider
Genre: Action-Adventure Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: Mar 5

God of War: Ascension
Genre: Action Distributor: Sony Date: Mar 5



Anarchy Reigns
Genre: Action Distributor: Five Star Games Date: Mar 31

► EB GAMES PRE-ORDER BONUS

Call of Duty: Black Ops II



Pre-order to get the following:

- Nuketown DLC
- A 'prestige token' that may be spent on one of the following:
 - Double XP: Double XP points for two hours of play.
 - Extra Custom Class: Create an extra custom class.
 - Double Weapon XP: level up your weapon faster.
 - Regular Package: Exclusive Callsign, Title and Emblem.
 - Unlock Gear: Unlock a Create a Class item early.
 - Hardened Package: Exclusive Callsign, Title and Emblem.
 - Veteran Package: Exclusive Callsign, Title and Emblem.
 - Reset All Stats: Give yourself a (manly) stat makeover.

EB Games exclusive \$108 Estimated dispatch date: 13/11/2012

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance
Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape Date: Feb 21

Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 3
Genre: Action Distributor: Namco
Bandai Partners Date: Mar 31

TBA 2013

GRiD 2
Genre: Racing Distributor: Namco
Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013

The Last Guardian
Genre: Adventure Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA 2013



The Last of Us
Genre: Action-Adventure
Distributor: Sony Date: TBA 2013

Metro: Last Light
Genre: Shooter Distributor: THQ
Date: TBA 2013

Lost Planet 3
Genre: Action Distributor: THQ
Date: TBA 2013

Dust 514
Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Brothers in Arms Furious 4
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBA 2013



Grand Theft Auto V
Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar
Date: TBA 2013

Doom 4
Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBC
Date: TBA 2013

Arcania: Gothic 4
Genre: RPG Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Beyond: Two Souls
Genre: Adventure Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA 2013

Fuse
Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA
Date: TBA 2013

Dragonball Z Budokai HD Collection
Genre: Action Distributor: Namco
Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013

Prey 2
Genre: Shooter Distributor: AIE
Date: TBA 2013

Wonderbook Book of Spells
Genre: Adventure Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA 2013

Deadpool
Genre: Action Distributor: Activision
Date: TBA 2013

Watch Dogs
Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBA 2013

Star Wars 1313
Genre: Action Distributor: Activision
Date: TBA 2013

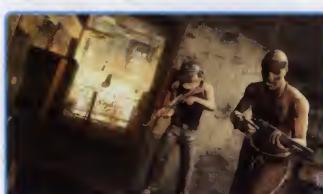
Injustice: Gods Among Us
Genre: Fighting Distributor: Warner Bros.
Date: TBA 2013

Splinter Cell Blacklist
Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBA 2013

Agent
Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar
Date: TBA 2013

Dragon's Crown
Genre: Action Distributor: TBA Date:
TBA 2013

Final Fantasy Versus XIII
Genre: RPG Distributor: Namco
Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013



Army of Two: The Devil's Cartel
Genre: Action Distributor: EA Date:
TBA 2013

Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII
Genre: RPG Distributor: Namco
Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013

Tales of Xillia
Genre: RPG Distributor: TBA Date:
TBA 2013

Remember Me
Genre: Action-Adventure
Distributor: TBA Date: TBA 2013

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2
Genre: Action-Adventure Distributor:
Mindscape Date: TBA 2013

Rainbow Six: Patriots
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBA 2013



Devil's Third
Genre: Action Distributor: TBA Date:
TBA 2013

Warrior's Lair
Genre: Action-RPG Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Serious Sam: BFE
Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

PS Vita Releases

PSVITA
PlayStation Vita

Q4 2012

Call of Duty: Declassified
Genre: Shooter Distributor:
Activision Date: TBA 2012

BioShock
Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K
Date: TBA 2012

Lego Batman 2 DC Superheroes
Genre: Platformer Distributor:
Warner Bros. Date: TBA 2012

Dust 514
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA 2012

Final Fantasy X
Genre: RPG Distributor: Square-
Enix Date: TBA 2012

Killzone
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA 2012

Zone of the Enders HD Collection
Genre: Action Distributor:
Mindscape Date: TBA 2012

Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD
Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2012

Rugby Challenge
Genre: Sports Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2012

SPECIAL EDITION Hitman: Absolution



The Deluxe Professional Edition includes:

- Collectable Agent 47 – Exclusive 25 CM Vinyl Hitman statue in special window presentation packaging
- Professional packaging – Clamshell box containing *Hitman: Absolution* game
- Exclusive making-of DVD – Shot over six months. See and hear what goes into launching a video game in 2012
- *Hitman* Art Book – Premium hardcover art book. Includes

EB Games \$148 JB Hi-Fi \$144 Estimated dispatch date: 20/11/2012

index

ACTION

Alien Breed 3: Descent	7
TEAM 17	
Top-down twin-stick affair that doesn't do enough to improve upon its predecessors.	
Armored Core V	5
FROM SOFTWARE	
Repetitive and needlessly complex. Building 'bots is cool, though that's about all there is.	
Army of Two: The 40th Day	7
EA MONTREAL	
Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the original <i>Army of Two</i> .	
Asura's Wrath	4
CYBERCONNECT 2	
Gorgeous to look at, but there's not much game here and it's packed with QTEs. Bleh.	
RECOMMENDED Bayonetta	9
PLATINUM GAMES	
It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.	
RECOMMENDED Beyond Good & Evil HD	8
UBISOFT	
Still one of the most charming games ever.	
Binary Domain	7
YAKUZA STUDIO	
More than competent shooter with cool ideas and gunplay but embarrassing dialogue.	
Bionic Commando	7
GRIN	
The great moments are few and far between.	
RECOMMENDED BloodRayne: Betrayal	8
WAYFORWARD	
A classy and colourful beat-'em-up that rewards exploration.	
Brave: The Videogame	7
DISNEY INTERACTIVE	
A family title smarter than the average bear.	
RECOMMENDED Castle Crashers	8
THE BEHEMOTH	
Violent but classy side-scrolling cartoon RPG-action. Best played in co-op.	
RECOMMENDED Child of Eden	8
Q ENTERTAINMENT	
You need a Move controller to wring the best out of this weird and wonderful blaster.	
The Club	8
BIZARRE CREATIONS	
Original, compulsive and fun.	
Dark Void	6
AIRTIGHT GAMES	
Uninspiring graphics, lacklustre sound and dull combat.	
RECOMMENDED Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	9
CAPCOM VANCOUVER	
If you missed it first time around, grab it now.	
Dead to Rights: Retribution	6
VOLATILE GAMES	
Fine, but doesn't stand out. Needs more dog.	
Devil May Cry HD Collection	6
CAPCOM	
A bit lazy. 720p gameplay, low-res cutscenes. <i>Devil May Cry 2</i> is the worst of the three.	
Devil May Cry 4	7
CAPCOM	
Memorable bosses but prepare to backtrack.	
NEW RECOMMENDED Double Dragon Neon	6
WAYFORWARD	
Scott Pilgrim does it better.	

Earth Defense Force:
Insect Armageddon
VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE
Ugly, repetitive and about 10 years out of date.



El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron

DEVELOPER: IGNITION TOKYO
DISTRIBUTOR: MINDSCAPE. PLAYERS: 1
"Breathtakingly beautiful and aesthetically inventive. Flits between genres and will hook you into its deep combat system that demands creativity to master."

The Expendables 2 Videogame 4
ZOOTFLY

A disaster from start to finish. Booooooring.

RECOMMENDED Final Fight: Double Impact

PROPER GAMES

Forget about *Magic Sword*; play *Final Fight*.

RECOMMENDED Galaga Legions DX 8
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

Bullet hell made pretty.

RECOMMENDED Ghostbusters: The Video Game

TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE

Robust, charming and impeccably presented.

Heavy Fire: Afghanistan

MASTIFF

A technical travesty. Full of brown.

RECOMMENDED House of the Dead: Overkill - Extended Cut

HEADSTRONG GAMES

Has its tongue so far in its cheek it's almost poking out the other side. Requires Move.

Hunted: The Demon's Forge

IXNILE

A textbook example of 'alright'. Co-op rules.

Inversion

SABER INTERACTIVE

Thoroughly mediocre and wastes what good ideas it does have. A car crash of a game.

ESSENTIAL Just Cause 2

AVALANCHE STUDIOS

Parachutes. Grappling hooks. Stripper zeppelins. An insane action game.

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days

IO INTERACTIVE

Clever visuals, dull game.

Metacretin: radical hatred of the games you like

Website: metacritic.com Game: Resident Evil 6 Reviewer: AzzaMat Score: 0

So I'm looking at a few of these 10 out of 10 reviews. Almost as if someone who wants the game to do well is creating many different accounts and posting 10's. No that can't be right, who would do that? Congratulations to the *Resident Evil 6* marketing team on an excellent plan. Let's hope no one notices! I haven't played the game only the demo, so I don't know how good the game actually is. This game is not something I want to get behind.

ABOUT THE INDEX

Check out our handy index of all the PS3 and PSV titles we feel you should play (and some you shouldn't). Please note: scores are a reflection of a game's comparative quality at the time of release and will not change – but the index may be updated as titles age or are superseded by new games.

Lollipop Chainsaw

GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE

Witless, puerile, and irredeemably dull. You'd be right to expect more from Suda51.

NeverDead

REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS

It isn't simply a bad game, but an intentionally bad game with a detestable protagonist.

Ninja Gaiden Sigma

TEAM NINJA

Violent but ace, despite its age.

RECOMMENDED Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2

TEAM NINJA

A sexy and rock-hard title but the gore's been cut.

One Piece: Pirate Warriors

TECMO KOEI

Dynasty Warriors in a new skin. Cool story, but you can play this with your buttocks.



Pac-Man Championship Edition DX

DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

PLAYERS: 1

"A revolutionary sequel that will put blisters on your eyeballs and thumbs. Hypnotically addictive and absolutely value packed, it's one of the best games you can buy on the PSN."

RECOMMENDED PixelJunk SideScroller

Q-GAMES

Old school fun meets new age design in a blaster that's very tricky.

RECOMMENDED Prototype 2

RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT

Silly plot, woeful voice acting, top-notch gory action and tonnes of fun.

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One

INSOMNIAC GAMES

Chaotic and confusing with four players, and a bit dull in single player.

Red Faction: Armageddon

VOLITION, INC.

Brown, corridor-based action that will leave you snoring. Get *Guerrilla* instead.

RECOMMENDED Red Faction: Guerrilla

VOLITION, INC.

The best destruction effects ever, hands down, with loads to see and do.

Spec Ops: The Line

YAGER

Tries to depict the horrors of war but fails. Gets better just before the credits roll.

RECOMMENDED Starhawk

SANTA MONICA STUDIO

Addictive multi, more than competent splitscreen. Buy it.

Time Crisis: Razing Storm

NAMCO BANDAI

Simple, short light gun fare. Ignore the new first-person shooter mode, it's awful.

RECOMMENDED Transformers: Fall of Cybertron

HIGH MOON STUDIOS

This is a must-get for fans. Two steps forward and one step back from *War for Cybertron*.

RECOMMENDED Vanquish

PLATINUM GAMES

Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now.

RECOMMENDED Velocity

FUTURLAB

A hypnotic racing-puzzler-shoot-'em-up and it's less than \$10. Challenging and stylish.

ACTION-ADVENTURE

3D Dot Game Heroes 7
FROM SOFTWARE
If you pine for the past you'll feel like this was made just for you.

Alice: Madness Returns 7
SPICY HORSE
Marries great ideas with average platforming.

The Amazing Spider-Man 7
BEENOX
The best looking *Spider-Man* in a long time. Rips off *Arkham City* but lacks the depth.

Assassin's Creed Brotherhood 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
The pinnacle of the series so far and the multiplayer is outstanding.

Assassin's Creed Revelations 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A safe but solid title that feels more like a (really big) expansion than a true sequel.

Batman: Arkham Asylum 8
ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
Really delivers the goods, and even though the sequel's out you need this too.



Batman: Arkham City 10
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. PLAYERS: 1
"Everyone else needs to take note: this is how a superhero game should make you feel. It's endlessly creative, perfectly moody and technically flawless."

Blades of Time 4
GAINJIN ENTERTAINMENT
Simplistic combat, stupid AI, woeful levels.

Brütal Legend 9
DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS
Must play, though the RTS bits are a bit crap.

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 9
MERCURYSTEAM
A truly solid romp with tasty combat.

Datura 6
SANTA MONICA STUDIOS
A proof-of-concept Move title that's little more than cobbled-together puzzles. Clunky.

Dead Island 8
TECHLAND
Bogus script and ugly but undeniably fun.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Super tense. The future of survival horror.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 2
VISCERAL GAMES
What it loses in isolation it makes up for in storytelling. Still scary.

RECOMMENDED Enslaved
NINJA THEORY
A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's *Monkey* was.

ESSENTIAL God of War III
SCESANTA MONICA STUDIO
A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection 9
SCESANTA MONICA STUDIO/BLUEPOINT GAMES
Age has not diminished the impact of these PS2 titles. A must-get.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection Volume II 8
READY AT DAWN
Two of the best PSP games now on your PS3. Meticulously updated and pretty to look at.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto IV 10
ROCKSTAR NORTH
The technical scope and scale of GTAIV dwarfs all. Remarkable.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto: Episodes from Liberty City 9
ROCKSTAR NORTH
Two new single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer and an explosive shotgun? Yes.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince 6
EA BRIGHT LIGHT STUDIO
Play the first 30 minutes and you've played the whole game.

Hydrophobia: Prophecy 5
DARK ENERGY DIGITAL
Shoddy game, great water tech.

RECOMMENDED I Am Alive 9
UBISOFT
The game that was retail but now PSN only is dark, constantly tense and very satisfying.

RECOMMENDED inFAMOUS 2
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
Bigger and better though the original is still excellent, and the level editor is solid.

RECOMMENDED LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes 8
TRAVELLER'S TALES
While its predecessor felt old this feels fresh, helped by talking mini-figures.

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7 7
TRAVELLER'S TALES
You'd have to be a fan to get this and 1-4.

RECOMMENDED LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures 9
TRAVELLER'S TALES
A joyous adaptation; one of the best.

LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars 8
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Bum subject, excellent lightsaber action.

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom 7
GAME REPUBLIC
A feel-good romp that's a little old-fashioned. Copies of this should still be in the wild.

Mafia II 8
2K CZECH
Great when it's on fire but the world feels empty, and it's quite dated now.

RECOMMENDED Max Payne 3
ROCKSTAR
A riveting rollercoaster where each gunfight is a ballet of bullets. Superbly atmospheric.

ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots 10
KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
Yes, it's as much a movie as it is a game but the production values are insane.

RECOMMENDED Metal Gear Solid HD Collection 9
KONAMI
MGS2 has aged, *Snake Eater* is still all class and *Peace Walker* rocks.

Ninja Gaiden 3 7
TEAM NINJA
Mind you don't impale yourself on the difficulty spike. Fans will lap it up.

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Harks back to the original Prince. You've been here before and the world's moved on.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time 9
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction 8
INSOMNIAC GAMES
A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure.

ESSENTIAL Red Dead Redemption 10
ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
A sweeping epic. Grab the Game of the Year edition for maximum value.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 4 8
CAPCOM
A straight port and it's not as pretty as it was, but it's still great.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5 9
CAPCOM
A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

NEW RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 6 8
CAPCOM
Starts out slow and then ramps up. Worth buying for Mercenaries mode.

RECOMMENDED The Saboteur 8
PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

Shadows of the Damned 7
GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE
Full of dick jokes and so-so gameplay from two geniuses of design. A real shame.

Silent Hill: Downpour 7
VATRA GAMES
True to the pants-browning original, but technical problems and stupid AI tarnish it.

Silent Hill HD Collection 7
KONAMI
True evil never dies; it gets a decent facelift.

Sorcery 7
THE WORKSHOP
A genuinely fun Move title geared towards kids. Fun, lively tone with wink-wink writing.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II 6
LUCASARTS
Earns a point-and-a-bit for every hour that it is long. Technically superior but still rough.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent 9
UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Obsessive and gripping, online and off.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among Thieves 10
NAUGHTY DOG
This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.



Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception 10
DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG
PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-12

"Impeccable in every regard. The action ramps up and up, taking you on foot-chases to teeth-gritting firefights and beyond to stunning set pieces. Totally complements and enhances the other games in the series."

RECOMMENDED Yakuza 4 8
CS1 TEAM
One for the fans, but it's very refreshing.

ADVENTURE

The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn 6
UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
You'll get a kick out of co-op.

RECOMMENDED Back to the Future: The Game Episode 1 8
TELLTALE GAMES
Fairly simple puzzles but, Great Scott, it looks and feels amazing.

RECOMMENDED Heavy Rain 8
QUANTIC DREAM
Not quite a revolution but very clever and very well-crafted.

PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation® Store



FINAL FANTASY VII

DEVELOPER: SQUARE
PLAYERS: 1
The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged. *Final Fantasy VII* is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.

DRIVER

DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS
INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1
The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car chases through cities may be old-hat now but when *Driver* debuted it was like nothing we'd seen.

CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED

DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG
PLAYERS: 1
The best platformer on any PlayStation. As far as old-school run and jump action in purpose-built levels goes, this is the zenith.

SYPHON FILTER

DEVELOPER: EIDETIC
PLAYERS: 1
If you still think *Syphon Filter* was a *MGS* rip-off you're misled. Play it again and tell us this awesome series doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback.

MEDIEVIL

DEVELOPER: SCE STUDIO
CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS: 1
Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's Sir Dan? Fantasy hack'n slash meets the supernatural, *MediEvil* still does it better than most since.



inhouse

FEATURED STUDIO OF THE MONTH

Milestone

LOCATION: MILAN, ITALY **FOUNDED:** 1996
BEST KNOWN FOR: SBK

Although their back catalogue swells with over 20 titles to their name, it's likely only hardcore racing fans will be familiar with this Italian studio. However, Milestone have covered many bases and disciplines of racing, from Superbikes to rally cars, often representing official, real-world racing bodies such as the SBK World Championship, the WRC, and the Italian touring car championship, Superstars Series.

The 100-strong team has stuck with racing games and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Its first successful title, *Screamer 2* in 1996, was one of its earliest. The PC rally game was set in a variety of countries around the world, each with their own weather conditions. A garage full of fictitious cars could be customised, including options for suspension and tyres.

A few key people who were involved in *Screamer 2* continue to work at the studio. Stefano Lecci, Head of Development and technology, who was in charge of *Screamer 2* development, crafted the physics of the first Super Bike World Championship title, celebrated for its handling mechanics. Giovanni Bianchin, Senior Vehicle Artist, has been with the studio since their third title, *Screamer*.

All their titles evolve Milestone's physics system and the team gets as

much hands-on time with the real-world vehicles as they can to represent them in-game. As Daniele Caso at Milestone tells us, "In WRC 3 we've worked in partnership with some of the most famous teams and drivers such as [Finnish rally driver] Jari-Matti Latvala, and [French rally driver] Sébastien Loeb, who gave us feedback about the driving model. Furthermore, our dev team went to rally events, to record a sample of the sound and take pictures of the stages – that allowed us to recreate the authentic WRC atmosphere. These techniques are used in all the games we develop."

Yearly updates to the SBK line of bike games, and the upcoming WRC 3, mean the studio is split into multiple teams, working in parallel. The launch of WRC 3 – the first WRC to be made for PS Vita, as well as PS3 – was, at time of writing, to be held at Italy's first dedicated Videogame Museum, VIGAMUS, in Rome. As well as WRC 3, Milestone are also making a version of MUD FIM Motocross World Championship, and are paying more attention to the handheld in the future.

Milestone are the first studio to formally acknowledge they're working on games for the next PlayStation. All they can tell us, cryptically, is that they're "preparing several surprises."



THATGAMECOMPANY Journey

DEVELOPER: THATGAMECOMPANY
Stunningly realised. A game unlike any other and perhaps the friendliest multiplayer.

TELLTALE GAMES Jurassic Park: The Game

DEVELOPER: TELLTALE GAMES
Rammed with QTEs and poorly made. Not much of a challenge and boring to boot.

TEAM BONDI L.A. Noire

DEVELOPER: TEAM BONDI
Slow-paced, laboriously detailed and well-executed. Stick with it and you'll be blown away.

TEAM17 SOFTWARE Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust

DEVELOPER: TEAM17 SOFTWARE
An amazing new low for this generation. Not even 'so bad it's good', it's just awful.

UBISOFT SHANGHAI NCIS: The Game

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Nothing wrong with this formulaic effort, but it's only for hardcore fans of the show.

DOUBLEFINE Stacking

DEVELOPER: DOUBLEFINE
A truly unique concept and a real brain tickler.

FIGHTING

PROJECT ACES BlazBlue: Continuum Shift

DEVELOPER: PROJECT ACES
Still wilder, wackier and nosier than anything else on PS3.

GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT Dead or Alive 5

DEVELOPER: GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT
A slick, beautiful mash of fighting polish and icky sleaze, but is sometimes a frantic mess.

345 GAMES Deadliest Warrior: Ancient Combat

DEVELOPER: 345 GAMES
Real people, ridiculous combat. Sun Tzu versus William Wallace? Sure!

SNK The King of Fighters XIII

DEVELOPER: SNK
Better than XII but still crusty.

NETHERREALM Mortal Kombat

DEVELOPER: NETHERREALM
A sterling, yet banned, return to form.

CYBERCONNECT 2 Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations

DEVELOPER: CYBERCONNECT 2
Stunning animation, but the biff is labourious.

REVENGE LABS Skullgirls

DEVELOPER: REVENGE LABS
Hand drawn characters and gorgeous animation. Wacky and weird but you'll love it.

NAMCO BANDAI SoulCalibur V

DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI
Great weapons-based combat for online play, but single player is a bit thin. IV still rocks.

IRON GALAXY Street Fighter III - Third Strike Online Edition

DEVELOPER: IRON GALAXY
Very different from IV and utterly brilliant.

READY AT DAWN Street Fighter X Tekken

DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN
Ridiculously entertaining and well-made, but the DLC strategy blows.

CAPCOM Super Street Fighter IV Arcade Edition

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
For first time purchasers only. You'll probably find this or SSFIV on the cheap somewhere.

NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS Tekken Tag Tournament 2

DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
Innovative and challenging. Tonnes of characters, including a few newbies.

CAPCOM Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
Blinding action with a roster you deserve.

SEGA Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown

DEVELOPER: SEGA
Fast and clean, but the tasty extras are DLC.

YUKE'S MEDIA CREATIONS WWE '12

DEVELOPER: YUKE'S MEDIA CREATIONS
QTE-central in sloppy controls.

FLIGHT

PROJECT ACES Ace Combat: Assault Horizon

DEVELOPER: PROJECT ACES
Reality-bending fare that lacks depth.

GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT Apache: Air Assault

DEVELOPER: GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT
Hardcore chopper sim with impressive detail but lacks variety. Good online, though.

GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT Birds of Steel

DEVELOPER: GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT
Hardcore stuff. The IL2 heritage shines through, but it's not as pretty as it once was.

TRICKSTAR GAMES IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey

DEVELOPER: TRICKSTAR GAMES
Packed with little details across the board.

TRICKSTAR GAMES Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters

DEVELOPER: TRICKSTAR GAMES
Fifth-rate design and presentation.

UBISOFT ROMANIA Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT ROMANIA
Way better mission design over the first title and good variety too.

HEADSTRONG GAMES Top Gun: Hard Lock

DEVELOPER: HEADSTRONG GAMES
Limp and aimless. A trap laced with nostalgia. That goes into a flat spin quickly.

MUSIC

HARMONIX AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack

DEVELOPER: HARMONIX
Bare-bones stuff, but fully exportable.

HARMONIX The Beatles: Rock Band

DEVELOPER: HARMONIX
Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

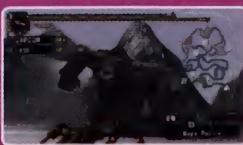
THE BEST PSP GAMES



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR LEEDS
PLAYERS: 1-6

This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, just like the PS2 versions, on PSP – and it feels absolutely brilliant. Also? Phil Collins is in it. Yes, we're totally serious.



MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM

PLAYERS: 1-4

Monster Hunter is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, rewarding you in spades if you're able to put the effort in. Even better with mates.



WIPEOUT PULSE

DEVELOPER: SCE LIVERPOOL

PLAYERS: 1-8

Wipeout has always been a cult classic, and this is no exception. It's fast, frenetic, and packed with variety. The tracks are varied and the graphics are sharp. If you're a fan of the series, this is a must-buy.



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS

PLAYERS: 1-6

Metal Gear is a proper, well-produced and thought-out Metal Gear; this is a must-have. The story's great and the action is totally addictive. We can't stress it enough: buy this game, and a PSP if you must. This is a title that no gamer should miss.



GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA

DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN

PLAYERS: 1

God of War is stupidly better than the already excellent *Chains of Olympus*, this still has fantastic graphics and tighter-than-Hades gameplay. If you're a fan of the series, this is a crucial part of the saga you really shouldn't miss.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2

FREESTYLE GAMES
Some great improvements and excellent mixes.

RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band

HARMONIX
Very good. Up there with *The Beatles: Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero: Metallica*.

Guitar Hero World Tour

NEVERSOFT
Good, but it's still no *Rock Band*.

Guitar Hero 5

NEVERSOFT
The last in the series with a dud tracklist.

RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica

NEVERSOFT
The best in the series since *Guitar Hero III*.

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock

NEVERSOFT
Functional, but it's missed the mark.

RECOMMENDED Just Dance 3

UBISOFT PARIS
Silly but energetic and well-rounded. Builds on a successful formula.

LEGO Rock Band

HARMONIX / TRAVELLER'S TALES
Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though.

PixelJunk 4am

0 GAMES
Move controls are poorly implemented. A pity.

RECOMMENDED Retro/Grade

24 CARET GAMES
A shooter-cum-rhythm game that's loaded with lasers.

RECOMMENDED Rock Band 3

HARMONIX
Improvements to the interface abound, but it's only as good as your existing DLC library.

RECOMMENDED Rocksmith

UBISOFT
More an educational tool than game, but it works really, really well.

SingStar

SCE LONDON STUDIO
Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.

PARTY**Ape Escape**

JAPAN STUDIO
A serious misstep. An on-rails shooter where the monkeys run towards you? Pass.

EyePet

SCE LONDON STUDIO
Harmless fun but pointless for adults.

Kung Fu Rider

JAPAN STUDIO
Waggle-tastic. A terrible Move game.

PlayStation Move Heroes

NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE
One for undemanding kids. Fun but bland.

The Shoot

COHORT STUDIOS
A limited Move rail shooter. Cool presentation.

Sports Champions

ZINDAGI GAMES
A must-have Move title despite a few quirks.

Start the Party! Save the World!

SUPERMASSIVE GAMES
A Move game for the very young.

Yoostar 2

BLITZ GAME STUDIOS
Imperfect yet hilarious movie karaoke title.

PUZZLE/PLATFORMER**Babel Rising**

MANDO PRODUCTIONS
This tower-defence god-game has a spirited concept but winds up being soulless.

ESSENTIAL Braid

HOTHEAD GAMES
Probably the best-ever example of how to implement time-bending physics.

RECOMMENDED Bejeweled 3

POP CAP
Addictive jewel-matching. Fresh.

RECOMMENDED Catherine

ATLUS
Niche and very weird in places, but addictive and challenging.

RECOMMENDED Chime

ZÖE MODE
A music-based puzzler where you need to slot in blocks to rockin' (and chilled) beats.

RECOMMENDED de Blob 2

BLUE TONGUE ENTERTAINMENT
Surprisingly fun, fresh and colourful. Get it if you can: Blue Tongue no longer exist.

RECOMMENDED Flight Control

FIREMINT
One of the best Move games ever.

RECOMMENDED Jak & Daxter Trilogy

SONY
PS2 mascots prove they are evergreen.

RECOMMENDED Joe Danger

HELLO GAMES
A platformer-puzzler with bundles of charm.

RECOMMENDED Katamari Forever

NAMCO BANDAI
Joyful, though the series is showing its age.

**LittleBigPlanet 2**

DEVELOPER: MEDIA MOLECULE PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-4

"A truly charming platformer. Incredibly innovative and never-ending; you could sink a lifetime into creating anything you want for this and never be done."

RECOMMENDED Outland

HOUSEMARQUE
Liberally copies bits from old-school *Castlevania* but it does it well. Very clever.

Papo & Yo

MINORITY
Deep, affecting subject, but it's a predictable, simple game. Not cheap, either.

RECOMMENDED Quantum Conundrum

AIRIGHT GAMES
If you're expecting more *Portal*, stop. Very cool ideas marred by frustrating platforming.

RECOMMENDED The Ratchet & Clank Trilogy

INSOMNIAC / IDOLMINDS
Excellent value for money and still refined.

Rock of Ages

ACE TEAM
Weird mash of tower defence and platforming.

RECOMMENDED Rayman Origins

UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
Utterly gorgeous. Truly great with two or more friends in co-op.

RECOMMENDED The Sly Collection

SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems.

RECOMMENDED Sonic the Hedgehog 4: Episode II

SEGA
Better than *Episode I* with tweaked physics. Also includes Tails, and he's actually useful.

Sonic CD

SEGA
Old-school Sonic stars in a beautiful port, but the game is a pig to play. Cheap-as, though.

Sonic Generations

SONIC TEAM
Starts out great and falters towards the end. Still worth buying, however.

The elephant no longer in the room

Remember Euclidean? It's the Brisbane-based studio that was promising remarkable graphical fidelity with its 'Unlimited Detail' technology. Since we interviewed Bruce Dell, the CEO, last year we haven't heard much from the company, and it looks like its focus has shifted away from games and into data visualisation, with a product called 'Geoverse'. We don't know if games have been completely abandoned, but it explains why we haven't heard much for the last 12 months.

**RECOMMENDED Sound Shapes**

QUEASY GAMES
A music-based romp that embraces user generated content. On Vita, too. Very good.

RECOMMENDED Trine 2

FROZENBYTE
Puzzles and platforming wrapped up with gorgeous three-player arcade action.

Wizorb

TRIBUTE GAMES
A modern take on *Arkanoid* with magic and special powers. Dirt cheap. Great on Vita!

RACING/DRIVING**Blur**

BIZARRE CREATIONS
A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.

RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise

CRITERION GAMES
Stunning and sharp but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode.

RECOMMENDED Daytona USA

SEGA
Addictive as ever and beyond arcade-perfect.

RECOMMENDED Dirt 3

CODEMASTER
A welcome return to form. Great car roster, awesome handling, incredible sound.

Dirt Showdown

CODEMASTER RACING
Flamboyance without substance and dumbed-down handling. Gymkhana rules.

RECOMMENDED Driver: San Francisco

REFLECTIONS
The series returns to its roots and delivers superb action-adventure racing. A must get.

RECOMMENDED Dyad

I
A seizure-inducing, music-based blaster.

RECOMMENDED F1 2012

CODEMASTER
Has more variety and toe-in-the-water moments. Weird flag rules, though.

Fuel

ASOBO STUDIOS
Huge, but bugged, boring and undercooked.

**Gran Turismo 5**

DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-4

"GT5 feels familiar, and is still an RPG masquerading as a racing game. It looks stunning with class-leading lighting effects and exceptionally modelled premium cars, and with a G27 wheel it feels incredible. We just wish that there were some more recent cars."

RECOMMENDED Mad Riders

TECHLAND
Cheap ATV thrills in a crowded market.

RECOMMENDED Skydrift

DIGITAL REALITY
Kart racing meets *Ace Combat*.

RECOMMENDED Split/Second

BLACK ROCK STUDIO
Not as sharp as *Burnout* but it's a true challenger.

Test Drive: Ferrari Racing Legends

SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS
Incredible sense of speed, frantic racing and plenty of depth. Features Mount Panorama.

RECOMMENDED WRC 2

MILESTONE
Better than last year's but still roughly put together. The only 'proper' rally title on PS3.

RECOMMENDED Wrecked: Revenge Revisited

SUPersonic SOFTWARE
Absolute must-have for local-multi.

RPG/ACTION RPG

Alpha Protocol
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Great concept, poor execution. Also? Worst male lead ever.

Ar tonelico Qoga: Knell of Ar Ciel
GUST
Defiantly old-school JRPG. One for the fans.

The Baconing
HOTHEAD GAMES
Butchered co-op and difficulty spikes.

RECOMMENDED Disgaea 4: A Promise Unforgotten
NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE
Very familiar for fans but still exciting.

RECOMMENDED Dark Souls
FROM SOFTWARE
Brutally, stupidly, gloriously hard.

RECOMMENDED Darksiders II
VIGIL GAMES
Slicker and much deeper than the first, and really tough too. Golden-age gaming.

Dungeon Siege III
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Sluggish combat and arse-backwards.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age: Origins
BIOWARE
As long as it is enthralling.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age II
BIOWARE
One step forward and two steps back.

RECOMMENDED Dragon's Dogma
CAPCOM
A challenging and punishing action-RPG where 'action' isn't an afterthought.

ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim 10
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
Book holidays; you will need 300+ hours to discover everything this offers.

ESSENTIAL Fallout 3 10
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
It's Oblivion in a post-apocalyptic wasteland.

RECOMMENDED Fallout: New Vegas 8
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
A great ride but you've been on it before.

RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII-2 8
SQUARE ENIX
Better; more freedom but still clunky in places.

Game of Thrones 5
CYANIDE
A generic RPG whose only appeal is its name.

Hyperdimension Neptunia 8
IDEA FACTORY
Very weird JRPG with neat attack strategies.

Hyperdimension Neptunia Mk2 5
IDEA FACTORY
A truly unnecessary sequel.

RECOMMENDED Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning 8
38 STUDIOS/BIG HUGUE GAMES
A patchwork of everything that's great.

The Lord of the Rings: War in the North 7
SNOWBLIND STUDIOS
Repetitive combat. Best in co-op.

ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 2 10
BIOWARE
Astonishingly rich combat-driven sci-fi.

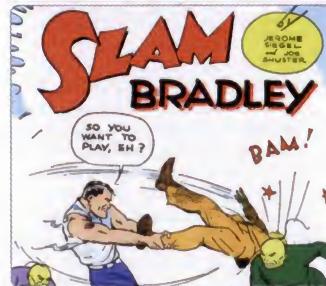
ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 3 10
BIOWARE
One-ups its impressive predecessor across the board. Buy it and *Mass Effect 2*.

Rainbow Moon 5
SIDEQUEST STUDIOS
Bland-as-batshit characters and dull combat.

Risen 2 5
DEEPSILVER
A mess. Send it down to Davy Jones' Locker.

Tales of Graces f 7
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
Saccharine, yet enticing. Looks lovely.

He ain't no Man-Bat



Detective Comics #27, May 1939, was the first time that Batman appeared in print. But, have you heard of Slam Bradley? He's another DC creation, and another detective with hand-to-hand combat skills, but a bit less of a superhero vigilante than Batters. His golden years were during the 1930s and '40s, but more recently (like, 30 years ago) Slam worked with Catwoman, rather than bring her to justice as ordered by Gotham's mayor.

Valkyria Chronicles

SEGA WOW
Strategy/RPG heads should not miss this.

NEW Way of the Samurai 4

ACQUIRE
Wacky and weird. Japanophiles will dig it.

Yakuza: Dead Souls

SEGA
Sluggish and dated, like a zombie wearing flares.

SHOOTER

Aliens vs. Predator

REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
One of the best movie-inspired titles ever.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield 3

DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Single player blows, multiplayer's awesome.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2

DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A deeply dedicated online community but the single-player mischief of the original is M.I.A.

Battleship

DOUBLE HELIX
A game based on a movie adapted from a boardgame. A copy of a thousand copies.

RECOMMENDED BioShock

IRRATIONAL GAMES / 2K MARIN
Grown-up gaming at its best.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 2

2K MARIN / DIGITAL EXTREMES / 2KAUSTRALIA
Doesn't match the original's plot but the combat has been spliced to near-perfection.

Bodycount

CODEMASTERS
Fundamentally broken and largely pointless.

Game of Thrones

5

CYANIDE

A generic RPG whose only appeal is its name.

Hyperdimension Neptunia

8

IDEA FACTORY

Very weird JRPG with neat attack strategies.

Hyperdimension Neptunia Mk2

5

IDEA FACTORY

A truly unnecessary sequel.

RECOMMENDED Kingdoms of Amalur:

8

RECKONING

38 STUDIOS/BIG HUGUE GAMES

A patchwork of everything that's great.

The Lord of the Rings: War in the North

7

SNOWBLIND STUDIOS

Repetitive combat. Best in co-op.

ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 2

10

BIOWARE

Astonishingly rich combat-driven sci-fi.

ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 3

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BIOWARE

One-ups its impressive predecessor across the board. Buy it and *Mass Effect 2*.

Rainbow Moon

5

SIDEQUEST STUDIOS

Bland-as-batshit characters and dull combat.

Risen 2

5

DEEPSILVER

A mess. Send it down to Davy Jones' Locker.

Tales of Graces f

7

NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

Saccharine, yet enticing. Looks lovely.

RECOMMENDED Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath

8

JUST ADD WATER

A fun mish-mash of platforming and shooting. Now with Move support!

RECOMMENDED Operation Flashpoint: Red River

8

CODEMASTERS

A massive improvement on its predecessor. Fun solo, but co-op over the PSN is awesome.

RECOMMENDED The Orange Box

9

EA UK / VALVE

Get it for *Portal*, keep it for *Half-Life 2*.

RECOMMENDED Portal 2

9

VALVE

One of the most brilliant games, ever.

RAGE

7

ID

Holds promise but the world feels empty.

RECOMMENDED Resistance 3

8

INNSOMNIAC GAMES

Derivative action but effortlessly compelling.

Rogue Warrior

3

ZOMBIE STUDIOS / REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS A fiasco. The best bit is the end credits.

RECOMMENDED Syndicate

9

STARBREEZE STUDIOS

Whilst not available in Aus, this punchy shooter is loads of fun in solo and co-op.

RECOMMENDED Twisted Metal

8

EAT SLEEP PLAY

Fast, refreshing and tactical. Great online.

SPORTS

AFL Live

6

BIG ANT

Does a decent job of things and it's better than *Rugby League Live*.

Backbreaker

7

NATURALMOTION

Great tech. Worth a look to see euphoria at work in a sports game.



FIFA 13

9

DEVELOPER: EA CANADA

PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22

"Inches closer and closer to the real thing. First Touch Controls are game- and genre-changing, and there's a very healthy and complex online component too."

RECOMMENDED FIFA Street

6

EA CANADA

Attacking feels good but defending will make you cry. Needs more fun in the next update.

RECOMMENDED Fight Night Champion

9

EA CANADA

Refined controls, excellent story mode and super-quick gameplay. Near perfect.

Grand Slam Tennis 2

7

EA CANADA

Great animation but the new control system feels a little off.

London 2012

6

SEGA STUDIOS AUSTRALIA

More thoughtful waggles and mashing than ever before. Better in multi.

RECOMMENDED Madden NFL 13

8

EA TIBURON

Dodgy physics aside, this is the best the series has been.

Move Fitness

7

COLDWOOD INTERACTIVE

Surprisingly effective fitness software.

RECOMMENDED NBA 2K12 VISUAL CONCEPTS Impeccably produced throughout.	9	F1 2011 SUMO DIGITAL Ugly, boring, and tragic AI.	6
RECOMMENDED NBA Jam: On Fire Edition EA CANADA Loads of fun. For \$20 you're mad not to get it.	8	RECOMMENDED FIFA Football EA FIFA 12, tweaked, and in your hands. Superb.	9
NEW RECOMMENDED Pro Evolution Soccer 2013 KONAMI Does lots of things differently to <i>FIFA</i> and it's doing them bloody well.	8	RECOMMENDED Gravity Rush JAPAN STUDIO Gravity-bending free-roaming action with a few RPG elements tossed in. Very stylish.	9
Rugby League Live BIG ANT Not as complete a game as the last one on PS2 and the whack team ratings frustrate.	5	LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7 TRAVELER'S TALES Lacklustre touchscreen controls, no co-op.	5
RECOMMENDED Skate 3 EA BLACK BOX Better in many ways, though we'd stick with the madness of <i>Skate 2</i> .	8	NEW LittleBigPlanet PS Vita DOUBLE ELEVEN It's <i>LBP</i> that you know and love on your Vita, but the touchscreen stuff gets in the way.	7
SSX EA CANADA Labryinthine courses mean plenty to do, but you might get lost on the way.	7	RECOMMENDED Lumines: Electronic Symphony Q ENTERTAINMENT Hypnotic and addictive music-based puzzle game with new twists.	8
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13 EA TIBURON Great golf game but you'll always need to be online to truly progress. Got 12? Stick with it.	7	RECOMMENDED Metal Gear Solid HD Collection KONAMI/BLUEPOINT GAMES A so-so port of excellent games, but you can play it on PS3 and transfer your saves.	8
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD ROBOMODO Skimpy. Lacks content and no splitscreen.	6	Modnation Racers: Road Trip SONY SAN DIEGO Much to do and create but no online multi.	7
RECOMMENDED Top Spin 4 2K CZECH Plays better with a DualShock, as the Move controls are spotty.	8	RECOMMENDED Mortal Kombat NETHERREALM NZ only, which is a shame because like the PS3 version its guilty, bloody, fun.	8
RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 3 YUKE'S MEDIA CREATIONS If you 'get' the sport you need this.	9	RECOMMENDED MotorStorm RC EVOLUTION STUDIOS Holy hamburgers, this is addictive stuff.	8
RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 4 SUMO DIGITAL Superb Move controls and supremely pretty.	8	Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus TEAM NINJA A solid no-frills port of the PS3 title.	7

STRATEGY

NEW RECOMMENDED Anomaly Warzone Earth 11 BIT STUDIOS Tower offence rather than defence, and it's excellent. Also has co-op.	8	RECOMMENDED Mortal Kombat NETHERREALM NZ only, which is a shame because like the PS3 version its guilty, bloody, fun.	8
Awesomenauts RONIMO GAMES There's no such thing as a quick game in this MOBA. A real slog at times.	7	RECOMMENDED Rayman Origins UBISOFT MONTPELLIER Utterly gorgeous platformer. Solo play only.	9
RECOMMENDED From Dust UBISOFT MONTPELLIER Creative and engaging god-game.	9	Reality Fighters NOVARAMA Cool idea but the biffo is simplistic.	6
RECOMMENDED R.U.S.E. EUGEN SYSTEMS Niche but supremely well-crafted strategy.	8	RECOMMENDED Rayman Origins UBISOFT MONTPELLIER Utterly gorgeous platformer. Solo play only.	8
NEW RECOMMENDED XCOM: Enemy Unknown FIRAXIS GAMES Fantastic concept and very engrossing.	8	Resistance: Burning Skies NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE Boring, with dumb AI and poor presentation.	5

PS VITA

Asphalt Injection GAMEROFT Piss-weak racer. Nice drifts, but that's it.	6	Touch My Katamari NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS Disappointing. Bereft of the usual charm.	5
Dynasty Warriors Next TECMO KOEI Mindless hack 'n' slash; needs to innovate.	6	RECOMMENDED Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3 CAPCOM Accessible to everyone and very pretty.	9
Escape Plan FUN BITS INTERACTIVE Clever ideas but feels like a gimmick at times.	6	Unit 13 ZIPPER INTERACTIVE Bland objectives and old-hat level design.	6
RECOMMENDED Floating Cloud God DAKKO DAKKO A thoroughly charming sidescrolling shooter.	8	Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour SEGA It's the PS3 game but on Vita, which is really quite good. Only worth buying once, though.	8
RECOMMENDED Everybody's Golf CLAP HANZ Excellent physics. Even though it's puke-worthy cute, you won't be disappointed.	8	RECOMMENDED WipEout 2048 STUDIO LIVERPOOL A very pretty robust racer; true to the series.	8

infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS
2004

X-Men Legends

CONSOLE: PS2 GENRE: ACTION DEVELOPER: RAVEN SOFTWARE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: US CURRENT PRICE: \$20 (EBAY)



Until this bad-boy came along, there were loads of X-Men games but absolutely no good ones. Not, not even *X-Men: The Arcade Game*. You just remember it fondly because Timezone's vibe could make anything amazing. RIP Timezone.

Deliverance would arrive about 12 years later when some bright guy at Raven Software (now reduced to designing menus for *Call of Duty*) lit the air with a eureka that went: "X-Men. Cel-shading. *Diablo*-style RPG. Awww yeah." The result was two X-centric games, *X-Men Legends* obviously being the first. The second, *X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse*, was also excellent, but kind of strange because it got so carried away with the whole *Diablo* thing all your randomly generated loot even had names like Super Enchanted Miracle Condom of One Night Destiny.

It's the first one's unassuming charm that made it something extra spesh. It's not like Raven weren't trying, but what they weren't doing was trying too hard. Unlike the disconnect you might've felt playing through the more recent *X-Men: Destiny*, rejigging the comic's established canon and casting players in new recruit Alison "Magma" Crestmire's fiery size 7s achieved the opposite – especially for those unfamiliar with Marvel lore.

As she goes from mortified emergent mutie to walking volcano of doom, you're with her all the way, setting endless goons alight and meeting all the X-Men through her newbie eyes. The former takes place

across various smackdown fields with a squad of up to four X-Men (the full roster of which is unlocked as you go along, although you get Psylocke dead last. Sacrileg!). In between those levels, you wander Professor X's mansion as Magma and get to know the likes of Cyclops, Wolverine, Rogue, and even Jubilee (whose own origin story is, interestingly enough, reminiscent of Magma's in the game. They even share a similarly daughter-dad relationship with Wolverine).

It's an unusual dynamic between outright button-thrashing and exposition that the sequel did away with in favour of keeping the action-tap flowing. In this way, the original is a slower game, but also way more absorbing. It's sweet just to check out the X-Men's individual rooms and see how their personalities inspire their interior decorating, or visit Beast in the lab to not understand what he's talking about.

X-Men Legends is not perfect by any stretch, but it's one of those games wherein its imperfections are a product of its carefree development – and often manifest in coolness that doesn't quite gel in a practical sense. Jubilee, for instance, is a hard character to make work in the context of kicking ass. She shoots fireworks, for Christ's sake. Rolling with her is a lot like rolling with Gambit except she's not as good – but how good is it being Jubilee, just 'cos? *Apocalypse* and the *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* efforts came after it, but none of them could touch the genuine soul of the patriarch. *X-Men Destiny* tried something similar with three 'origin' stories but absolutely tanked.

Time for a third with the same heart, we think.  **Toby McCasker**

FINAL FANTAX-MEN

When Raven first sat down to hash out some ideas for their fledgling *X-Men* RPG thing, their initial concept looked a lot like "*Final Fantasy* with X-Men." Which is to say, an old school FF game with turn-based fighting starring all your sexy mutant faves and Cyclops charrrgin' his laser. Eventually they decided players might want more control over the team's individual powers and scrapped this idea, but may we say in eight-year retrospect: *Final Fantasy* with X-Men would have been awesome.

Next month



BACK IN BLACK

Call of Duty: Black Ops II

From campaign to multiplayer and zombies in between, we review the biggest shooter in the world - will it come out all guns blazing or is it firing blanks?

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Strong violence and
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